

Christian Iconography

André Grabar

A Study of Its Origins



The A. W. Mellon
Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1961.
Bollingen Series XXXV.10
Princeton

Introduction

The heritage left us by Greco-Roman antiquity includes a large number of works of Christian art. These are not, it is true, the paintings and sculptures that come to mind when we think of classical art, but we must not forget that the art of late antiquity was a large family, to which the first Christian art also belonged. Further, we must remember that, because of the very great number of traditions that go back to it, this first Christian art plays a significant part in the history of Christian art of all times and all peoples.

Limiting ourselves to iconography, we will attempt in the following pages to show what can be observed of the manner in which the Christian images of late antiquity were created and what role these images played alongside other forms of Christian piety. In order to conform to the method of fixing the chronological limits of antiquity that is generally followed today, the monuments that will be considered will all be works that precede the rise of Islam.

This study is not meant to be a manual of ancient Christian iconography, where one would legitimately expect to find a systematic presentation of all the known types of images. Nor is it a history of iconography which would show the modifications these images underwent in time. My intentions are both more and less ambitious. Instead of considering all the monuments or all the categories of Christian images, I will cite only characteristic examples. But, on the other hand, I would like to say more about the nature of these images, about their form, and especially about their content. Let us pose the two questions that are at the basis of this inquiry: (1) Why do Paleo-Christian images look as they do, or, in other words, how were they composed? (2) On the religious level, what purposes did these images serve at the time of their creation?

To put these fundamental questions is to initiate two kinds of investigation: on the one hand, a study of the material creation of Christian iconography during late antiquity; and, on the other, an inquiry into the functions of these images in early Christian piety. The distinction between these two kinds of problems is evi-

dent, but in practice the investigator does not separate them, and the history of the elaboration of religious iconography is seldom distinct from the themes dictated by the piety of the faithful. Thus, in the present work, the motivations and procedures involved in the creation of Christian images will not be discussed in special chapters, nor will other chapters be set apart to deal with the religious purposes for which these images were adopted. Instead, these problems will be treated simultaneously with reference to different themes or to groups of monuments which will serve as examples. The examples will be chosen not so much to give complete illustrations of the themes or groups as to present some characteristic and important facts.

In all its parts this study has a historical character and, in consequence, is far from being an essay on Paleo-Christian iconography presented in the form of coherent and complete groups of images that would, taken together, be a mirror of Christian theology. Nor does it deal with those various quasi-mechanical procedures which, applied to Christian themes, would produce the Christian images that we know. Finally, without denying the role of spontaneous creation to the makers of images (generally, what we have are only workshop-produced stereotypes of sacred themes), we will leave to individual creativity only what our preliminary analyses do not oblige us to attribute to common motifs. Not long ago scholars had much more confidence in the creative faculties of the makers of Paleo-Christian images. The images seemed to be direct transpositions—or copies of such transpositions—of the words of Scripture into painting or sculpture, in terms that had, naturally, been invented by the artist. There appeared to be no need to assume intermediaries between the Scriptures and the artist. This view owed much to the Romantic idea of the inspired creator, but it also depended upon the undeniable fact that the very nature of Christianity as a revealed religion relates it—and its images—to the Book which contains its entire doctrine.

But to presuppose such a use of the Scriptures, and a considerable creative gift, in the obscure makers of images at any aesthetic level is to accord them tacitly what nobody would think of admitting for a theological or literary work, whatever the talent of its author. It would never occur to anybody to suppose that a writer invents the words and locutions he uses, and it seems normal that the originality of his work with regard to its very basis and form should be further limited by many other factors.

This is, of course, universally recognized today for every field of human endeavor, and the study of Paleo-Christian iconography has followed the general movement, although somewhat timidly. Without question the process of creating Paleo-Christian images was no exception and is comparable to what occurs in related fields of man's activities. The creative process is a series of steps—some conscious, others not—by which the artist sets out to compose an image and does

it with the assistance, deliberate or unsuspected, of all the memories that his task brings out: his education, reading, ambient ideas, personal experience, other images. Of all the influences that contribute to the creation of a new image, those of remembered images are among the most active, just as in literature the most prominent influence is often that of other literary works. It is this that makes it imperative that the historian of Paleo-Christian iconography consider with particular attention all the problems of possible relationships with common contemporary imagery, sacred and profane, in the formation of Christian images. It goes without saying that, at the beginning of the Christian experiment in iconography, the inspiration could have come only from the art of other religions or from profane art. Generally speaking, however, during the last centuries of antiquity the diverse images that had sprung up in an astonishing profusion in all forms of art and in all milieus within the Roman Empire were more than usually interdependent. The makers of Christian images could not have been ignorant of the multifarious figurations that surrounded them, nor could they have escaped being to some degree influenced by them. One could say, and we will return to this, that Christian iconography was born in this epoch thanks to the exceptional growth of figurative art in the Roman Empire.

Our study of Paleo-Christian images will be largely concerned with their sources in the visual arts; and it will lean heavily on the investigations and discoveries concerning Greek and Roman imagery, both Christian and non-Christian, that have been made in the last two or three decades.

Who has not been as much disturbed by the hermetic character of an Indonesian or a Mexican work of art as by a phrase in a language he does not know? In fact, any particular image of any period of history contains its share of motifs common to the society that produced it—commonplaces, in truth—just as a written text or any verbal expression contains words and locutions of current usage. The most inspired lyric poem, clearly marked by individual genius, is nonetheless the product of the specific language of a given society and owes to it the great majority of words, locutions, or turns of phrase that it employs.

Exactly the same thing holds for iconographic matters. And this leads us to the repetition of a fact that is indeed banal but must be pointed out in any attempt to define the bases upon which the original Paleo-Christian images were founded: that from its beginnings Christian imagery found expression entirely, almost uniquely, in the general language of the visual arts and with the techniques of imagery commonly practiced within the Roman Empire from the second to the fourth century. It is a bit embarrassing to repeat such obvious facts, but I do not believe it is superfluous, especially considering the attempts that were made—much later and in much more distant countries—to interpret the same Christian subjects

by using idioms entirely independent of the Greek and Roman systems of imagery. If we look, for instance, at the Christian images painted by the Chinese or the Arabs, which in their own way—but in a way that appears quite strange to us—evoke an evangelical scene or personage, we become aware how essential the contribution of the Greco-Latin iconographic language has been to Christian imagery at all periods, even down to our own; and we can realize even more forcefully how essential it was to the Christian imagery of late antiquity, which will be our principal concern.

This classical language—the most nearly perfect we know—opened infinite possibilities to the Christian image-makers. Naturally enough, they used it in a very unequal fashion, borrowing at times a varying number of its terms, sometimes using only a few simplified expressions, at other times taking over a whole rich repertory of motifs. But various as were their borrowings, all of them remained indebted to visual motifs common to the Mediterranean area at the beginning of our era, when Christian iconography began.

It seems to me that one further remark is necessary. Since we have compared the elements that compose a Christian image with the words and locutions of verbal language, it is useful to recall a fundamental fact, which is—once again—disturbingly banal, but which is unfortunately often forgotten, perhaps just because of its banality.

No one would think of classing as works of art—*belles-lettres*—everything that is expressed in words; in this field, art holds only a limited sector, which we think we can define fairly exactly. Most prose, whether oral or written, is manifestly removed from aesthetic or poetic concerns. The same thing holds true for all the other modes of expression that man has at his disposal, and notably for graphic and plastic techniques, for the construction of buildings, etc. A distinction is generally not made between works that serve practical ends—those which, in the realm of imagery, fix and transmit facts or ideas—and images that interpret these facts and these ideas in poetic fashion through procedures that are essentially artistic. We are wrong in thus confounding informative images and expressive images. The first appeal solely to the intellect (exactly like a technical text), while the others make an appeal to the imagination and the aesthetic sense. It is an abuse to include among works of art all those painted, drawn, or sculptured images which in large part are really only signs that stand for a human figure, an object, or an idea, whether those signs are of a descriptive or a symbolic character.

It would avoid a good deal of confusion if we were more often mindful of this primary truth, and did not consider every image from the past as a work of art. It is certain that a good number of Paleo-Christian and medieval images ought to be excluded: the artisans who made them were presenting personages and events in

order to make them known to their contemporaries; the simple fact that the images were painted or sculptured is not enough to make them works of art. There is one category of early Christian and medieval figurations in which informative images are more clearly separated than elsewhere from expressive images. This is the category of manuscript illustrations. The pictures that accompany treatises on mathematics, astronomy, or medicine are essentially informative. They serve to make the text more comprehensible. But the illustrations of books of the Bible or of classical tragedies rarely confine themselves to this function. They are parallel to the text and almost necessarily interpret it, and they interpret it always by turning to the methods of art.

It is difficult, of course, to trace a line that would distinguish absolutely between informative and expressive images. It is enough to remember the artistic qualities of certain illustrations of ancient scientific books such as the Greek manuscripts of the physicians Dioscorides or Nicander. On the other hand, a goodly number of Greek or Latin manuscripts with innumerable little stereotyped images hardly deserve to count as works of art.

It is nonetheless true that in itself the use of the techniques of painting or sculpture does not automatically make an artist of the man who uses them, nor does it make the result a work of art. Such painted or sculptured products, neither artistic nor poetic, have little or no interest for the history of art, and its methods of investigation ought not to be applied to them. The historian of iconography, however, can inspect them with as much profit as authentic works of art, because iconographic terms are equally present in any painted or sculptured image. Iconography is, after all, the aspect of the image that informs, the aspect that is addressed to the intellect of the spectator, and is common to prosaic informative images and to images that rise to poetry, that is, to art.

Thus we see very clearly how iconographic studies encroach on the domain of the history of art, especially for those periods which, like the one that interests us here, constantly used the image as a means of conveying information, for example, to convey the content of a religion and the various forms of piety. During such periods, iconography is an important and constant means of diffusing knowledge of the most diverse facts; and this is why it is entirely justifiable to consider this informative iconography as one considers a language, without connecting these activities with artistic enterprises.

I have just said that Christian imagery, at its birth, borrowed, and kept, the Greco-Latin iconographic language as commonly practiced at the beginning of our era everywhere around the Mediterranean. That this is undeniable can easily be verified by observation of certain of the most general and frequent features of Christian images: the presentation of the human figure, its posture, physical type,

costume, and habitual gestures and attitudes, its common accessories, and the architecture or furnishings that surround the figure. An incalculable number of features, inseparable from the Greco-Roman imagery of the Empire, passed into the Christian iconographic language just as naturally and inevitably as words, expressions, and syntactical or metrical constructions of the first centuries of our era—of Aramaean, Greek, or Latin—passed into the language of Christian theologians.

Christian iconography, it is true, came into being only about two centuries after the foundation of Christianity, when the religion had been defined and propagated by means of the word. But, except for the difference in time, the use commonly made of means of expression and diffusion by the Christian authors or by the Christian image-makers of late antiquity was the same: they expressed themselves in the language—visual or verbal—that was used around them.

This is only natural. But it means, *a priori*, that, with regard to Christian imagery, the great majority of its distinguishing features were neither created nor invented by the makers of the first Christian images. Almost everything in their work was dictated by the models they followed; and it was actually because of this that the new, Christian images they created were understandable to their contemporaries, and therefore effectively achieved the ends intended.

Against this background of a common repertoire of motifs—a koine of the Greco-Roman period—the Christian sculptors or painters had only to trace a few new features and details to transform an image of a type common in that period into a Christian image, that is to say, into one that evoked a Christian thought or a historical event charged with Christian meaning. Materially, this specifically Christian additive could be insignificant, taking only little space, and appearing only to the informed eye because it was expressed by allusion, not directly. For the Christians of the time, however, as for the image-maker, the detail was revealing: it gave the work its value and, though barely perceptible, was the ground on which the work could be accepted or rejected. There are, for example, sarcophagi with the figure of an orant or a Good Shepherd which can be attributed to the Christians or to the pagans only by virtue of details that, at first glance, may not seem significant.

Except for a few themes peculiar to itself, Paleo-Christian iconography has no terms of its own. In other words, the language of the Christian image-makers of late antiquity is not comparable to a complete language—the language of a people or a certain ethnic group—that has a vocabulary that answers every need, with an appropriate syntax. The Christian iconographic language is comparable rather to one of those special or technical languages that linguists call parasitic. Such incomplete languages with a special and limited vocabulary are parasitic because, like parasitic plants, they depend on another language—another plant—and take from it those terms which are needed for the special area involved.

Just as there is a language of electricians, sailors, or thieves—all languages of limited use, which are grafted onto the stock of a national language—there is a Christian iconographic language, which does not comprise a complete repertoire of original signs appropriate to all possible uses but consists of a limited group of technical terms which, when added to the normal terms of Greco-Roman imagery of the time, give the image the desired Christian signification.

Whereas the general language is known to everyone and is constantly used, the specialist, speaking in the field familiar to him, introduces a certain number of technical terms. These terms are normally confined to the specialized field for which they have been created, but one or another of them is sometimes adapted to another field, and is made to refer to subjects of a different kind. Thus language creates substitutions, and new versions of those terms which were originally reserved to a technical field and to the language of specialists are adapted to new subjects. It is in this way that Christian image-makers utilized the theme, for instance, of the philosopher, which had originally been defined in the art of the philosophico-religious coteries of the Empire. The Christians repeated it, but gave the image of the philosopher taken from this special iconographic language a new value as a symbol of Christ, the “true philosopher.”

In order to take account of this kind of procedure, and thus study one of the means most frequently employed for creating new Christian images, we will attempt to define a certain number of general themes—such as Death and Resurrection—which, at the period we are discussing, came into being in Christian iconography. In this way an iconographic typology can be established, a network of constants which, through individual works and in company with constants common to everything appearing at the time, reveal closer lines of kinship between works in related categories. In the case that concerns us, it is a matter of images which, whether they be pagan, governmental, Christian, or Jewish, treat related themes. In fact, this community of ideas imposes on images of different origins similar formulas.

For example, there were several religions that liked to represent visually everything touching upon the great power of their respective gods; in its turn, Christianity took this theme into its iconographic program. The iconographic solutions of one group act on those of the others. But in order to perceive this network of interdependence, one must first recognize what linguists call the semantic fields, that is, the sum of words (for language) or subjects (for iconography) that form semantic families, that is, families of words or subjects that are related to each other by their meaning. Words of very different roots and forms can belong to the same semantic family: for example, conquer, conqueror, victory, trophy, glory, domination, and the corresponding defeat, prisoner, slave, struggle, hunt, circus, etc., are of the

same semantic field; and in iconography, the scene of a victorious combat, the trophy that is a symbol of victory, a crown of laurel, the figure who crushes the conquered, success in the hunt or in the amphitheater, an arch of triumph, or the subjection of barbarians present the same theme. Like words of the same semantic field of a language, terms of the same semantic field of imagery are connected with each other not by their form but by their content; and this is of great importance for our studies in iconographic creation.

A new image can have as its source another image which does not resemble it formally. The link between the two is of a semantic nature; that is to say, both (despite their different appearance) belong to the same semantic field of a given iconographic repertory—for instance, the repertory of late antiquity. Thus, for example, there are several types of images of the Resurrection of Christ. Each differs from the others, but all represent the same dogma, and all are borrowed from iconographic formulas for Triumph as presented in the imagery of the Roman Empire: the raised cross presented as a trophy, the type of Anastasis that shows Christ trampling down the Evil One, or Christ with the adder and dragon. Although they represent the same dogma, these images have nothing in common visually. But they are related because they all derive from types that had already served to represent Triumph in the monarchical and agonistic art of the period. The Christian image-makers went back to the same source: the images in the semantic field of the idea of victory or triumph. The iconography of Triumph showed the way to the iconography of the Resurrection. Theoretically the Christian image-makers could have found another means of expression for this dogma, but they do not seem to have done so at this time.

In considering the ways in which the earliest Christian images evolved, we should emphasize the importance for our purposes of the definition of these general themes under which we place the different concrete subjects. For, if the grouping of subjects by general themes is valid, there are better chances of grasping the manner in which dissimilar iconographic formulas are applied to subjects of the same semantic family and similar iconographic formulas are applied to subjects which, although they seem to be unrelated, are really concerned with the same general theme. Constants play a major part in many ancient Christian images. To recognize them is to understand better the manner in which these images were created.

I will not discuss here all the procedures of the early Christian image-makers. But it is important to keep in mind that creativity in this area consists in appropriating existing figurations by shifting the meaning of repeated formulas, by taking over known iconographic formulas, or composing similar ones by analogy. In one instance, and a rare one, we will see pre-Christian iconographic formulas applied in a sense diametrically opposed to the meaning they held originally. I have

in mind those images of Imperial art which served to glorify the power of Rome and its representatives by showing the defeat of Rome's enemies, who are bound, judged, condemned, and beheaded. Christian image-makers took over this imagery, but used it to glorify the judged and condemned—Christ, the apostles, the martyrs—and to stigmatize their persecutors—the princes, the judges, the Roman soldiers.

In attempting to observe the procedures of iconographic creation in late antiquity, we can, as I have indicated, benefit from the experience of linguists, and particularly from their studies of technical languages, because, within the Greco-Roman imagery of the Imperial age, Christian iconography had the characteristics of a technical language. Now in speaking of a technical language or a specific iconography, we recognize implicitly that the technical language or the special iconographic language has its own particular functions, which are its *raison d'être*. Of this I am, in fact, convinced: that in late antiquity there were no Christian images made for the sake of producing a pretty fresco or an appealing figurine or genre scene. Indeed, we know of no such Christian figurations, where creation is a gratuitous act—art for art's sake.

All the Christian images that we know had a definite religious purpose, and this is why we will investigate examples of these images by grouping them according to the religious need each group served. This method permits us to understand better the meaning of each image: taken in isolation, apart from a specific context, an image can be understood in many different ways; but its religious meaning becomes clear when it is considered as a part of a series of images, all serving the same purpose. For example, the orant in a catacomb and, later, the orant in a martyrdom scene do not have the same religious meaning. Nor do the scenes of the miracles of Christ on a sarcophagus and those on the walls of a baptistery answer the same purpose.

In other words, the grouping and examination of images in related series permits us to establish the semantic fields in iconography of which we have been speaking. At the same time it shows, as dictionaries do for words, that the same iconographic term—the orant, the Good Shepherd—has different meanings according to the context (that is to say, according to the purpose of the given image). The first step can be compared to what happens when we establish lists of synonyms (separate terms that have similar meaning); the other step corresponds to a study of homonyms (terms that sound alike but have different meanings).

With regard to method, a last point merits attention at this place. In linguistics one often comes upon the problem of synchronism or its opposite, the problem of distinguishing in time the phenomena that are observed. There is, in fact, no question that certain phenomena belong to the language of one single period, while others represent steps in an evolutionary process or successive transpositions. In certain respects the situation is plainer in iconography, since the facts that one

observes all belong to dated, or more or less datable, monuments. But since iconographic terms do not change systematically or according to regular curves and the dates of many monuments remain uncertain, and since, moreover, as with languages, the same iconographic term can be employed simultaneously with different meanings, each of them invented at a different date, iconographic studies do not escape the problem of synchronism. Were the images we see created simultaneously, as elements of the same repertory of figurations? Or is it a question of different steps in the work of the same image-maker (successive phases of the same images)?

Since we are concerned here only with Christian antiquity, we have less chance of committing grave errors by confusing the simultaneous with the successive. But the danger exists: there were, in the Christian religion, a good many shifts between the third and the sixth century. The image of the orant, for example, had several meanings to the earliest Christians, but could have had all of them at once to a Christian of the fifth century. But these meanings were formulated successively, at different moments. Thus the historian who seeks to understand the material creation—the visible evidence—of Christian iconography will have to distinguish the meanings chronologically, and sometimes to take into account earlier meanings, because, for example, the initial significance of an image can clarify the meaning given to the same image at a later time. Excellent examples of the usefulness of this method will be offered by the works themselves when we attempt to explain the religious meanings of some types of Paleo-Christian images of the Virgin Mary.

Preface

In general, the study of the origins of an image that expresses a religious concept leads to a better understanding of the reasons for its existence. By learning where, when, how, and for what end a certain image was created, we begin to apprehend the religious significance that the image may have had to its creators. It is therefore all the more pertinent to inquire further into the very first Christian images and the conditions under which they were created.

Figurations of a Christian character are normally endowed with a religious function, and this function is all the more certain for the first images created by Christians because of the circumstances under which they appeared. No extra-religious consideration could, at that time, have dictated the use of imagery to any Christian if he were not determined to possess an expression in paint or stone of some Christian truth or some personal attitude toward a serious problem of life. Neither the laws of the pagan Empire nor Christian custom—then nonexistent—can account for this adoption of imagery; thus the postulate that these first images are such figurations as those which at other periods are so often passively repeated, and about whose real religious value one can have reasonable doubts, is immediately eliminated. Those first makers of Christian images, who worked at their own risk and to their peril, would never have done so without serious religious reasons, especially since the first generations of Christians had worshiped without cult images. But the practices of the idolaters, who all made extensive use of paintings and sculpture, made it unavoidable that a change of principle with regard to images had to take place.

We must start our inquiry by a study of the beginnings of Christian imagery and the problems it poses with an awareness of what was being done—in the existing situation—outside the Christian communities, not only among the devotees of the great traditional religions of Greco-Roman paganism, but also among the Jews and the adherents of other non-Christian religions within the Roman Empire. We will have to examine the oldest Christian images, their form, and their content, by

placing them beside analogous and contemporary representations that are not Christian, in order to understand the religious purposes of those who created them. This necessitates undertaking two important excursions (see pp. 8 f., 10 f.). The first will be devoted to the form of the first Christian images, which are remarkably concise and hold to the strictest essentials; it will also deal with the iconographic language of these schematic images, or image-signs, and the problem of the antecedents of similar Christian figurations. The second excursus will probe the reasons why these image-signs were used in the particular area of funerary art in the Christian catacombs and sarcophagi. These images for the most part represent the salvation or deliverance of one of the faithful, whom God has saved from the peril of death; but in some cases they recall the doctrinal merits of the deceased—his baptism, his communion. What was the religious purpose of these images and others—pagan ones—which present evident psychological analogies? The answer to this question will inform us better as to the religious intent of the makers of the first Christian images.

The second chapter will be chiefly devoted to some Christian images that make us feel the breadth of the influence exercised by the official art of the Roman state on the young Christian art at its beginnings. In recent years there has been much discussion of the art that flourished in Imperial Rome at the end of antiquity, but its effects have been studied only partially, and primarily with reference to the influence exerted by images of the Emperor. In reality, this influence was far more general, and it can be said that at its birth Christian iconography received no more powerful impact than that of the images of the “governmental” cycle, by which term we designate all the subjects that represent the political, military, and judicial powers of the Emperor and the agents of the Roman state and that show its activities. This is a whole area that has never been explored, as such, in its entirety.

Among the other areas of art practiced at the heart of Roman society, the semidecorative, semisymbolic imagery that flourished in the villas of the great landed proprietors must also be cited. We will see how, and under what conditions, the art of the latifundia lent itself as a source for the Christian image-makers of the end of the period we are considering.

I. The First Steps

The earliest Christian images appeared somewhere about the year 200. This means that during roughly a century and a half the Christians did without any figurative representations of a religious character. It almost seems a pity, since this rejection of images—never proclaimed *expressis verbis* by the theologians—leaves us without archaeological testimony as to the spiritual state and reigning disputes of the Christian communities before the year 200. We date the oldest Christian paintings of the catacombs to about 200, and the oldest representational sculptures on Christian sarcophagi to the first third of the third century, even though we know that this chronology is rather insecure, since it does not rest on dated written documents. In fact, a number of topographical, stylistic, and iconographic features indicate that the earliest subterranean mausoleums in Rome, those of Domitilla, Calixtus (crypt of Lucina), Priscilla, etc., are close in date and generally slightly later than the year 200. The first funerary frescoes of Naples and Nola are more or less contemporary with those in Rome. The first sarcophagi with Christian subjects, those of Rome and Provence, belong to about 230; and the mural paintings of the chapel (baptistry) unearthed in the little Roman garrison town of Dura-Europos, on the middle Euphrates, on the Persian frontier, are also of about 230. It is from these monuments that we will take our first examples of Christian images. I have said above, in the preface to this first part of our study, why it is important to look first at the earliest iconography of the Christians—even though the chronological order of the monuments will not be followed afterward.

Let us consider some examples of painting in the Roman catacombs, choosing them from among the earliest. What one notices first in these funerary hypogea is that the ceilings, and sometimes the walls, are divided into compartments by a pattern of straight and curving lines. This framework of decorative lines is aesthetically predominant in the paintings of the catacombs and is very characteristic of that art which, in the midst of the cemetery, tended to gaiety.

Some of the figures, generally very small (they were to become larger only in

the fourth century), are no less attractive; this funerary art goes beyond the fears and sorrows of death and puts on an air of gladness. The little figures isolated in the centers of their delicately framed fields represent orants or Good Shepherds whose decorative effect seems more important to the painters than the meaning, for they use them as motifs that they alternate within their designs. The figures are, however, allegories of the soul of the pious believer and of Christ as the shepherd (see below, pp. 10, 11, on the sarcophagi). But the catacomb painters have not deviated from a pleasing manner, and all of the figures show the imprint of this attitude. In the same agreeable tone they paint a Daniel in the lions' den, a resurrection of Lazarus, Noah in the ark, or the Adoration of the Magi: the protagonists are young and graceful, with elegant gestures and noble mien. And it is rare to find one of these paintings that does not reproduce a conventional scheme.

In catacomb painting, and on sarcophagi as well, the story of Jonah is told in the same gracious and fluent manner but in several successive episodes: Jonah thrown into the sea, Jonah vomited by the whale, Jonah resting in the shade of a pergola. Here again the decorative intent takes precedence; the artist responsible for these religious symbols has separated the diverse episodes of the story of Jonah and distributed them in the panels afforded by the general arrangement of the ceiling or wall decoration or the sarcophagus wall.

This art is an easygoing one, indifferent to detail, to the individual expression of the figure, to the precise traits of a face. One finds uncompleted architecture, and surprising negligence in Biblical images of a narrative character. But these paintings of the catacombs are not meant to represent events—they only suggest them. It is enough to indicate one or two salient features, in order to designate a specific person, event, or object. These few traits do not define the images at all, but the informed viewer is invited to make use of the summary indications to divine the subject. In other words, the paintings are schematic—that is, they are image-signs, which appeal above all to the intellect and which imply more than they actually show. Since the value of a sign is commensurate with its brevity, there are no limits to its use except those imposed by the necessity of remaining understandable. It is imperative that the sign be unequivocally decipherable. We know, of course, that the frequent use of any sign in a certain context permits surprising abbreviations. One may cite the famous paintings in the crypt of Lucina which show a fish that serves as a support for a small basket filled with white ring-shaped objects. The Christians who went there knew how to decipher such a painting: communion.

And they knew, too, that the image of the fisherman alluded to Christ and to the apostles, fishermen of souls. But in some cases the brevity is certainly excessive, as when, for example, a scene that represents a meal of some kind has no detail that would distinguish between the Multiplication of the Loaves, the Miracle of Cana,

the Last Supper, or the repast in paradise beyond the tomb. Those who planned the mural paintings in the catacombs were probably not entirely averse to a certain ambiguity in their image-signs, since the Multiplication of the Loaves, for example, was regarded as a symbol of the agapae of paradise or a figuration of the Last Supper. This deliberate ambiguity is evident in certain cases, as in the so-called "rooms of the sacraments" in the crypt of Lucina, where a communal repast is shown as the Multiplication of the Loaves (indicated by the presence of twelve baskets), though the scene appears next to a scene of baptism, which would argue in favor of a banquet representing the Last Supper. For it is this gospel episode that is the foundation of the sacrament of communion, which the adjacent image of baptism, another sacrament, would appear to call for. Of course, the matter is even more complicated than this, and more than one archaeologist, trying to identify this scene of baptism, has hesitated between the baptism of Jesus and that of a neophyte. This confirms what we have said before: image-signs, as found in the catacombs, fulfill their purpose successfully only in so far as they are clear; but the concept of clarity is a function of the training of the viewer.

It goes without saying that the clarity of the image-sign also depends on the degree of complexity of the subject that it is meant to communicate. We have lost the key to most of the scenes represented on the walls of the hypogeum of the Aurelii, under the Viale Manzoni in Rome; so we cannot agree on the meaning of the very interesting scene in the catacombs at S. Sebastiano in Rome that shows a person dressed as a soldier ascending into the heavens before a circle of amazed spectators. In Christian imagery, the representation of unusual subjects is rarely attempted. But who can provide any final solution to the puzzling scene in the catacomb of Priscilla, where one person seems to point to a star in the presence of a woman and child? And who can identify with any certainty, in the catacombs of the Cimitero Maggiore, the mother and child who appear with a monogram of Christ on either side and are flanked by two donors? Is this really the Virgin Mary, or is this some Christian woman with her child?

However, it is not only the laconic image-signs that are difficult of interpretation. The descriptive scenes, without inscriptions, in the catacombs discovered in 1955 under the Via Latina afford a whole series of subjects, beginning with the now famous image of a group of sages or doctors with a body, presumably dead, stretched on the ground. In all these cases, and in a certain number of others of the same kind, the image-sign no longer fulfills the function for which it was created. It lacks clarity for us, either because the subject it is meant to translate is too complex or because our iconographic information is insufficient.

It is certainly not the task of the historian to judge the relative effectiveness of the image-sign of Paleo-Christian art as a means of iconographic expression. But

recognition of the limits of its effectiveness does indicate what functions could have been assigned to it. These functions are comparable to those of general ideas in language. Some of these general ideas are abstract in character, while others tend to become so as a result of extremely frequent use. In the series of abstract ideas there is, for instance, the notion of piety, which has as an image-sign the orant, or the idea of philanthropy, which—although it is less obvious to us because of the greater rarity of the iconographic term—has its iconographic counterpart in the figure of the shepherd carrying the lamb. In the series of ideas made banal by use, some examples that quickly come to mind are names of feasts: the Annunciation to the Virgin, Easter, the Epiphany of Christ's Baptism. The words, like the corresponding image-signs, are enough to recall the evangelical events commemorated by these feasts.

All the earliest Christian images belong to this category of pictorial signs whose characteristics have just been defined. It is in funerary art that we find the oldest examples (there was an analogous imagery made for the living, even though we cannot say whether or not it began as early as the sepulchral imagery). The image-signs that fill the Paleo-Christian catacombs and sarcophagi are of two kinds with respect to their semantic value. A limited number of iconographic signs represent the two major sacraments of the Christian Church, baptism and communion. The majority of the others serve as references to or citations of divine intervention for the salvation or preservation of certain believers: the preservation of Noah, during the Deluge; the deliverance of Isaac, when Abraham would have sacrificed his son; the deliverance of Daniel from the lions or the three Hebrews from the furnace; or, from gospel narratives, Lazarus restored to life by Jesus or the paralytic cured, shown carrying his bed.

When these highly schematized scenes are painted in the catacombs or carved on sarcophagi, their presence next to the body of the dead has the same meaning as the prayer of the burial office called the *commendatio animae*: they enumerate the precedents for divine intervention for one of the faithful, and express the desire that God may exercise the same benignity toward the person who is now dead: God, save him, as you saved Daniel, Noah, etc. The rituals that we know are not earlier than the ninth century, but the correctness of this interpretation cannot be questioned, since identical prayers for the living have come down to us, of which several go back to late antiquity. The extension to the living of prayers evoking the saving power of God in the Biblical past also explains the cycles of analogous images decorating objects in common use such as drinking glasses or engraved and painted cups decorated with gold leaf. Prayers of this kind, which seem to have served mostly for individual worship and even for magical invocations, probably go back to Jewish versions. It is even possible that the image-signs of some of these Biblical

salvations or deliverances were first created by the Jews for their own use. Jewish examples of deliverance—Abraham, from sacrifice of his son Isaac; Noah; and Daniel—are known. But whether the Christians knew, at the beginning, image-signs of Jewish making or only Jewish prayers with the formula: Save me as you have saved Noah, etc., the great proportion of veterotestamentary salvations in the catacombs and on the sarcophagi, but especially in the catacombs, makes it very probable that there was some initial Jewish contribution. The images of salvation mean: God who in the past has saved all these pious men will do as much for the now deceased (or for the owner of the object on which the images appeared).

The psychological intent is slightly different when, instead of the precedents for salvation, one of the sacraments is represented—baptism or communion (see above, pp. 8 f.). Here, obviously, there can be no question about Hebraic influences, nor about the formula: Save me as you have saved others. These images, found only in sepulchral art, serve to point out that the deceased was a Christian by representing the two sacraments. It is no longer only the intervention of God but participation in the sacraments of the Church which assures the salvation of the dead.

The Christian imagery of allusive signs employed, astutely enough, only a very limited number of figures, and this saved it from confusion. Nevertheless, it is surprising, if we think of pagan usage at the time, and of funerary art in the Middle Ages, to see how small a place is devoted to Christ in the earliest Christian art or to symbols that would stand for Christ. This applies to Paleo-Christian art before the edicts of tolerance. At this early time, the Saviour appeared only in the guise of various allegorical images, which had remarkably few individual traits. There was chiefly the Good Shepherd carrying a lamb, which signified that the shepherd, an allegory for Jesus, saves the lamb, an allegory for the Christian soul. The image-makers made no attempt to be more specific. Like the ceilings of the catacombs (see above, pp. 7 f.), the façades of certain sarcophagi line up three Good Shepherds; and these may have, indifferently, the features of an adolescent or a bearded man of ripe age. Without going into examples that show how the image of St. Peter was influenced by these allegorical images of Christ (see below, pp. 69 f.), it can be said that as a general rule these allegorical images were relatively abstract, on principle; for in pagan Roman art, as has been shown above, the figure of the shepherd carrying the lamb was a symbol of philanthropy—*humanitas*. As Theodore Klauser has recently observed, it was by starting from a symbol of moral philosophy that the Christians created the allegory of Jesus that was the most common one in the third and fourth centuries.

Christ as the Good Shepherd has a counterpart in the deceased as orant. This is evident in the earliest catacombs and on the façades of Paleo-Christian sarcophagi. The pagan symbolism of the Romans had used the same orant to signify *pietas*; thus,

here again, Christian art began by representing abstractions not only to designate Christ but also to characterize the ordinary Christian. We will see that in both cases the later history of Christian iconography involves an attempt to replace the abstract symbols by concrete representations—portraits, in fact. But first let us turn our attention to a second allegorical figure for Christ (or his forerunner Job), the philosopher, which occurs as early as the Good Shepherd. This allegory, unlike the Good Shepherd, was afterward quickly forgotten, and this is why it is more difficult for us to recognize an allegorical representation of Christ in the figure of the philosopher on the Christian sarcophagi. But modern exegesis leaves no doubt that the bearded man with the nude or seminude torso in an exomis tunic, shown seated on a stool, often reading a book, is certainly Christ as the true philosopher. Of course, the deceased believer sometimes takes on the features of the philosopher, but as a general rule this iconography is reserved for Jesus, and the deceased stoop before the philosopher who has taught them the true philosophy.

In the oldest catacombs, images of salvation taken from the Old Testament predominate; there are, however, a few instances of the Christ-Thaumaturge, particularly in the representation of the resurrection of Lazarus. But the catacombs and the sarcophagus reliefs of the fourth century freely multiply instances of the miracles of Jesus. What seems to have happened is that the image-makers and their clients grew increasingly conscious of the idea of a more personal image of Jesus, this individualization developing through his thaumaturgical works. However, before multiplying the miracles of Jesus, the early image-makers often reproduced a single scene of his infancy, the Adoration of the Magi. The special place reserved to this subject is surprising for us only because we have for centuries celebrated December 25 in commemoration of the birth of Christ at Bethlehem. But the ancients celebrated his birth either on the day of the Epiphany of Baptism (January 6) or the day of the theophany of the Magi (January 5); and the paintings of the Paleo-Christian funerary cycle retain the reflection of this latter very archaic usage. The image of the Adoration of the Magi replaces the whole Christological cycle. It is the iconographic sign that indicates the principal argument in favor of the salvation of each believer: the fact of the Saviour's Incarnation and his work on earth.

The necessity of redemption is sometimes indicated by an image of Original Sin, Adam and Eve, separated by the tree, with the serpent. But with a certain negligence often characteristic of their work, or perhaps with the deliberate intention of representing only the promise of salvation (and not anything that could be an obstacle to it), the men who made the images in the catacombs and on the sarcophagi did not often represent our original ancestors. There are, however, some very early examples of this image (Naples, Nola); and in the fourth century it was included in some of the more complete ensembles where the image-signs are

grouped systematically as a general demonstration of the scheme of salvation, as on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (A.D. 359). Original Sin (*g*) serves here to counterbalance a whole cycle of the Redemption developed especially to show not only the Passion of Christ (*h, d-e, c*) but the martyrdoms of the two Roman apostles, Peter and Paul (*b, j*). The Redemption cycle begins with an Entry into Jerusalem (*h*), a scene of the coming of the Saviour that is an iconographic synonym of the Adoration of the Magi. Thus the more developed cycle confirms that the Adoration of the Magi was a sign of the Incarnation-Redemption. So far as I know, the Adoration is the oldest image-sign for this central fact in the record of collective and individual salvation; and this explains its frequent appearance in funerary art from the beginning.

In their main outlines the iconography of the catacombs and the iconography of Roman sarcophagi are the same. Nor is there an essential difference between the iconography of Roman sarcophagi and that of the provincial sarcophagi of the third and fourth centuries (southern Italy and Sicily, northern Italy, Provence, Spain, Roman North Africa, and even Constantinople). But because of the progressive enrichment of the repertory and the iconographic innovations that were made everywhere, the unity of this iconography for sepulchral use appears only when the chronology of the monuments is taken into account. There is greater unity, in the beginning, in the paintings and reliefs of the third century. It diminished gradually after the triumph of Christianity, each branch of Christian art tending to greater autonomy and each undergoing different influences. We will return to this a little later in speaking of the relationship between image-signs representing Biblical subjects and descriptive images representing subjects analogous to or even identical with those of the image-signs. Let us say now that the free exercise of the Christian cult was not favorable to artistic activity in the catacombs, and painting in churches and mausoleums above ground must have grown rapidly in importance. From the second half of the fourth century on, the paintings in the catacombs—which were given up completely in the fifth century at Rome (in Naples, vast subterranean galleries of easy access were still used for several centuries after the Peace of the Church)—appear either as repetitions of older frescoes or as reproductions of paintings in above-ground buildings (the latter, for example, in the newly discovered catacombs under the Via Latina). It is from this last point of view that these later works ought to be studied, especially in matters of style but also with regard to their iconographic program.

The iconography of the sarcophagi of the fourth century is more interesting and original. Here, too, the monumental art of the great sanctuaries raised after the Peace of the Church left a profound imprint, and we will take note of several iconographic creations of this type on the sarcophagi, not only with regard to

images of Majesty (see p. 79) but in speaking of the iconography of Christ and the apostles Peter and Paul (see p. 68), and also in connection with the oldest figurations of the Resurrection or the Incarnation (see p. 123). In addition, the sarcophagi, like the frescoes of the fourth century, show the image-sign growing toward the descriptive image; and we will look at this in due course (see p. 93).

Before considering this evolution in the very nature of Christian imagery, the question should be asked: What was the exact religious value of the Christian images that we consider as initial, those which we designate by the term image-signs? One can obviously stop at the easy answer: These figurations of funerary art, like any other images, served to call to mind the events they represented. But to be content with this is to evade the real question. When the Christians abandoned their negative attitude toward imagery, adopting a repertory of images and using it in such sacred places as mausoleums and cemeteries, they had serious reasons for doing so. What exactly were their intentions?

We know that the images of the earliest cycles belonged to catacomb painting and sarcophagus decoration, the two categories of Christian art that we have discussed with respect to their religious meaning. Most of the images represent examples of salvation or preservation (especially deliverance from the danger of death) that God accorded to some of the faithful in the past; other images are concerned with the work of Jesus the Saviour or the Christian sacraments. These last meant, clearly, that the deceased, by virtue of his devotion, could hope to share after death the prospect of those who believe in Christ. But these definitions of the subjects of the images still do not entirely explain the grouping of precedents for individual salvation around a tomb or the presence of images signifying the work of redemption for all men or the merits of the deceased.

The psychology behind such a use of images becomes a bit more comprehensible if we compare the Christian funerary program to that of the pagans of the same period. On their sarcophagi, and sometimes on the walls of their mausoleums, the latter often represented scenes drawn from mythological stories, of which some had Death as a general theme—scenes of the death of a hero, Meleager, Endymion, etc.—while others represented the soul of the deceased transported to the beyond, to heaven or to the happy isles. In decorating sarcophagi with images of this kind, what the pagan sculptors did was to adapt the subjects furnished by prevailing religious iconography to the central themes of funerary art. In this respect the schemes of the pagan funerary cycles prepare us for the images of the cycles of the Christian cemeteries. The pagan cycles influenced the formation of the Christian ones.

There are, of course, essential differences between the pagan and Christian funerary programs. First, the theme of Death is absent from Christian funerary art,

whereas it is at the very center of the corresponding pagan program. The Christians systematically avoid Old Testament or gospel subjects that recount the death of anyone. It is seemingly the victory of Christ over death that excluded this theme from Paleo-Christian sepulchral iconography. Second, while Christian iconography continues the pagan tradition of images of life beyond the tomb, it does so much more discreetly. For a long time representation of the afterlife is limited to the allegorical figure of the orant or, even more abstractly, the lamb that the Good Shepherd carries on his shoulders; both are images of the soul of the Christian. It is only at the end of the fourth century, and even then only rarely, that there appears the image of the deceased led to paradise by a saint—a tardy and exceptional Christian version of an ancient theme of pagan sepulchral iconography.

Of all the pagan burial images, certain scenes of the labors of Hercules in the recently discovered private funerary hypogeum under the Via Latina are the most closely related to Christian funerary figurations—or at least to one of the major categories of those figurations, the images of salvation. The relationship is apparent only if the deeper religious meaning of the two cycles of images, pagan and Christian, is considered. For in both cycles the true sense of the images is an evocation of a divine power which works for the good of man. On the Christian side, it will be remembered, the episodes represented are those where God saves a believer from death; on the pagan side, they are the exploits of Hercules who, according to the beliefs of the time, was a “savior,” a hero who devoted his life to working for the deliverance of men. In other words, the Christian images of salvation or deliverance and the pagan images of the labors of Hercules were both meant as demonstrations of a divine power working for men; and it was for this reason that they were used in funerary art.

The parallelism extends further. The Herculean cycle in the catacombs of the Via Latina is not limited to the exploits of Hercules but includes also those whom his efforts benefited (Alcestis, after her death, led by Hercules to her husband, Admetus, who, now immortal, inhabits an ideal world beyond). It thus forms a real counterpart to the Christian images that represent God's deliverance of Abraham, Isaac, Noah, Lazarus, or the paralytic. The Christian images, like the paintings of Hercules in these catacombs, were effective because of this: they invited each and every man to see his own end in the enviable condition of the Biblical or mythological persons who had experienced an especial divine solicitude.

Recognizing the relationship of the early Christian images to pagan versions of contemporary funerary art helps us to perceive the religious meanings of all these images. But to grasp more fully the intention of those who grouped the two cycles together at the tombs, we can bring to bear the testimony of another category of images of the same period—the images inspired by the Roman games. These

were very common figurations at the time of the first Christian images, but their relationship to the Christian images has never been seen because the subjects appear to be too different. The importance of the games of the circus and hippodrome, which had innumerable consequences in every level of Roman society, is well known. The language of Christian worship borrowed much from the language of the circus, either comparing a martyr, or simply a believer, to a victorious athlete or designating the vicissitudes and triumphs of religious experience in terms of combat and victory in the arena. In parallel fashion, Christian iconography had recourse to the repertory of imagery created for the circus and borrowed more than one image, for example, that of the athlete standing beside a cippus where he will place his crown, the reward for his triumph, or the image of the fighter in the arena battling a wild beast. In short, Roman Christianity did not remain isolated from the world of the circus and hippodrome; and therefore, for this period, it is legitimate to propose other comparisons, such as those which we will now make, not of iconographic subjects but of another function of images.

36 It is thanks to the excellent study by the Dutch archaeologist J. W. Salomonson that I am able to propose such a comparison. In studying a pavement mosaic of the fourth century found at El Djem, Tunisia, he has produced evidence that it represents a banquet of five circus fighters (*venatores*) and that it belongs to the Roman cycle inspired by the spectacles of the arena. He has, furthermore, been able to explain the presence of not only the prophylactic motif of the sheaf of millet that is repeated several times on the border around the central image but also another prophylactic symbol, in the form of a scepter, that one of the five figures holds in his hands. In various ways, several other North African mosaics are related to the mosaic of El Djem. They also are scenes inspired by the circus, showing the combat of man and animal or of animals only, both types being represented in conjunction with familiar prophylactic symbols: the sheaf of millet, the scepter, or more abstract motifs of Punic origin. Among the analogous images, a second mosaic from El Djem 37 is particularly instructive in that it has—in addition to the images showing a fighter and some prophylactic symbols (the subjects mentioned occur together with an image representing protection against the evil eye)—inscriptions drawn from the acclamations shouted at the arena, exclamations by which the crowds expressed their admiration for the favorite gladiators: “You are alone” (in being able to accomplish such an exploit); “For eternity” (may your glory be eternal). The inscriptions reveal the triumphal character of the figurations.

These images thus represent the triumphs of the *venatores* of the circus. One might well include them among the iconographic commemorations of the past exploits of famous fighters if it were not for the fact that these images are accompanied by, or sometimes framed by, prophylactic symbols and acclamatory in-

scriptions which reveal that the men who commissioned them had in mind an eternal perpetuation of the exploits in question. For, since prophylactic symbols have no retroactive value, it would be superfluous to represent them in a simply commemorative image. The fact that they are present—even numerous and frequent—indicates that the compositions were meant to exert in themselves a beneficial influence in favor of those who owned the images or those who viewed them. In other words, because of these symbols and inscriptions in images of the circus cycle, we can be even more certain as to what was intended by an important category of contemporary images of the earliest Christian iconography; for these images reveal the same kind of intent as that of the Christian images of salvation or deliverance. That is, the motive for consecrating images to the victorious exploits of celebrated circus fighters, with emphasis on the purpose of inviting perpetual renewal of these triumphs, is psychologically very close to what the Christian image-makers intended by an image of the deliverance of Noah or Daniel, which also was created only for the purpose of inviting a similar divine action toward a contemporary.

Two groups of archaeological facts reinforce the connecting links between the pagan and Christian images that we have been discussing. On the one hand, there are the many other Roman works inspired by the circus which are manifestly apotropaic. Salomonson, using in part the older studies of Waldemar Deonna and other classical archaeologists, notes the frequent representations of a man fighting an animal, or of wild animals attacking other animals, on various objects in common use such as vases, plates, pitchers, or lamps. The prophylactic significance of these themes inspired by the circus games is confirmed by the use of the struggle against a wild animal in ancient books of oneiromancy. These works interpret this image as a favorable presage; and the same interpretation holds for the images of *venatores* in combat with a wolf, lion, or bull or of combats between animals. This fact is extremely important for the study of Christian iconography in late antiquity, and will be of use again later in regard to another chapter of its history (the images inspired by the cycles that we have called the cycles of the *latifundia*). At this point it is necessary to consider the prophylactic significance of representations of combat between man and animal or between animals because it throws a new light on the probable meaning of some of the primitive Christian image-signs.

There are pavements of the first centuries of our era with images other than those of the arena that lead in the same direction. It is at Antioch, in the private houses, that one finds most of them. They represent the feminine personifications Ananeosis, Ktisis, Soteria, Apolausis (restoration, foundation, preservation, well-being). Each of these personifications corresponds to something desired, including the acts of laying a foundation or restoring a dwelling: such acts are personified to invite a favorable future for the new house.

All the myriad motifs and subjects of pavement mosaics like that of the victorious *venatores*, which we have been considering, testify to the same intent: to wit, the *raison d'être* of this kind of composition was prophylactic. These images were thought to function actively.

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Alongside the very numerous pagan pavements (whose location has saved them from destruction) we can place only a small number of analogous Christian figurations. But there is one most valuable example. It is a vessel of lead, possibly liturgical, which was found in Tunisia in the nineteenth century. Published at the time by G. B. de Rossi, it has since disappeared. The sides of this simple object are covered with *repoussé* reliefs which curiously juxtapose a large number of motifs drawn from Christian and pagan repertoires. That the object itself is Christian there is no question, because of the use of the motifs of the lamb, the four rivers of paradise, palm trees, etc., but the motif of circus athletes with their crowns of victory is also present, as well as scenes of animal combat. The heteroclit group of images is accompanied by a Greek inscription, which wishes well to those who use the vessel. This makes it clear that the figurations, uniting Christian motifs and motifs of the arena, are prophylactic symbols: they are brought together on the base in order to contribute to the realization of the hopes formulated in the inscription. Finally, this object is a precious one in that, by juxtaposing images of the two cycles, it removes our last doubts as to the legitimacy of our comparisons with images inspired by the circus. The Tunisian vessel is material proof confirming the conclusion that the images of the cycle inspired by the circus had a prophylactic value and that Christian images, notably those which formed the cycle of salvation in the catacombs and on the sarcophagi, could be charged with the same function. There, too—without ever having stated it *expressis verbis* or even having formulated it for themselves—what the image-makers drew was not primarily images commemorative of former salvations but representations of the divine power that remained forever present.

In establishing this point we define one more area where the Christians started from an established tradition and then interpreted it in their own manner; and we also draw, from the comparison with related pagan monuments, some valuable observations on the probable religious and moral import of certain Paleo-Christian images.

It can also be suggested that Christians at the same period—the period of their first iconographic efforts—perhaps used images to express theological ideas. They were close to this when they represented the two principal sacraments of the Church, baptism and communion, in their funerary art at Rome, as noted above (pp. 8 f.). In speaking of these images, we included them among the subjects meant to distinguish the deceased as a believer who could confidently expect the salvation of his soul. But it is equally certain that images of the sacraments, whether purely symbolic

(fish and bread) or descriptive (scenes of the baptism of an anonymous neophyte and of meals taken in common) or Biblical, with allusions to the sacraments (the baptism of Christ, the Multiplication of the Loaves, the Last Supper), contain also in germinal form an affirmation of dogma.

The same thing is true of other Biblical scenes that we have classed among the images which, besides the sacraments, define the religion of the deceased; for example, Adam and Eve with the serpent, and the Epiphany (the Adoration of the Magi). For these evidently contain another affirmation of essential Christian dogmas, original sin and redemption.

Having pointed out these incursions that the first Christian iconography made into the area of dogma, we should stress the fact that the number of images of this kind, and the number of dogmatic themes that they referred to, was extremely limited in comparison with allegorical figures and representations of salvation. This is particularly true for the catacombs. The sarcophagi of the fourth century attempt more in the way of the iconography of dogma, and we will see some examples in the chapters devoted to the Paleo-Christian creations that are the most important in this domain (themes of the Trinity and the Resurrection). In fact, it is probable that this iconography did not arise within the bounds of the initial funerary art which concerns us at the moment.

Nevertheless, early Christian art in its Eastern branch furnishes one remarkable case, unique at the period, of a cycle of mural paintings in which both the subjects and their arrangement proclaim their dogmatic character. These are the mural paintings of a small baptistery of about 230, one of the group of rooms set apart for the Christian cult in a private house in the town of Dura-Europos.

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Discovered shortly after World War I, the portion of the baptistery that remains was moved to the Yale University Art Gallery, where, with its frescoes, it has been reconstructed. The date of this building and its paintings cannot be disputed, and thus we know, thanks to the Dura baptistery, that from the reign of Severus the Christians had cult buildings in Roman cities, even though their religion was unlawful, and that they had at their command a relatively rich religious iconography. It is not known whether the existence of such buildings was peculiar to the eastern provinces of the Empire, but there is no reason to assume that it was. We know that places of Christian worship, along with everything in them, were totally destroyed everywhere during the persecutions of the third century and the beginning of the fourth. It is pure chance that saved some portions of the baptistery of Dura; the building was buried deliberately, about 256, by the defenders of the fortified Roman town, on the eve of a Parthian attack, to reinforce the adjacent city walls; the burial, intended to be temporary, became permanent when the Parthians took the town in 256, and the building was not rebuilt.

The iconographic program of the baptistery of Dura is not necessarily one that was peculiar to the Semitic Christians of northern Syria. But whatever its place of origin, it is distinguished from the iconographic ensembles of the catacombs by the relationship that it establishes between its subjects and their arrangement on the walls, with certain subjects manifestly taking priority over others. The hierarchy established by the location of the images is emphasized by differences in proportions and in techniques. Thus the scene of Adam and Eve, which in the catacombs may be placed anywhere among the salvations and without any topographical relationship to the Good Shepherd, is treated differently in the baptistery of Dura. The most central spot in the room, the niche of the *chevet* (behind the font), is reserved for two images, Adam and Eve and the Good Shepherd with His Flock. In other words, images representing the essential dogmas of original sin and redemption are made central by their location; and furthermore, for obvious reasons, it is the image of redemption, in the form of the Good Shepherd and His Flock, that predominates. While the image of original sin takes up only a corner of the niche, at the bottom, the idyllic image of salvation stretches over the rest of the wall.

All the walls of the baptistery were covered with paintings, and as less than half of them remain it is impossible to know the scope of the entire iconographic program. Perhaps it is chance that, in the extant part, evangelical scenes predominate (four to one), whereas in the earliest catacombs of Rome and the Campagna, it is clearly the Old Testament that is pre-eminent. But at Dura the remaining fragments testify that the images were intended to celebrate the baptismal rite: the Samaritan woman at the well and the miracle of Christ walking on the water evoke the theme of water essential to the office of baptism. We are also shown the victory of David over Goliath, the healing of the paralytic, and, naturally, the Resurrection of Christ (the theme being translated iconographically by the scene of the holy women at the tomb).

On this point a comparison is permissible with the catacomb paintings, which surely owe their numerous images of salvation to the office for the burial of the dead. The idea that inspired the Jewish and Christian prayers, as well as the Paleo-Christian liturgical offices which followed them, produced similar results in the catacombs of Rome and in the third-century baptistery at Dura. In praying for the dead or for the neophyte, the Christians constantly went back to evocations of salvation or deliverance and, consequently, to the idea of an appeal to divine power (at Dura: the victory of David over Goliath; the miracle of St. Peter, whom Jesus saves from drowning; the miracle of the paralytic cured). This is the reason for the use, both in the catacombs and in the baptistery, of images whose religious import is identical. As for the Resurrection of Christ, essential to the offices of both baptism and burial, though images of it are still wanting in the catacombs, they are frequent

and important on the sarcophagi from the fourth century on. On this point also, therefore, the practices of the image-makers of about 230 at Dura and of the third and fourth centuries in the West are fairly closely allied. One might even suggest that in the place reserved for the mystery of Christian initiation, just as in the burial grounds, the images were intended to do more than recall events of the past: they were intended in some sense to perpetuate the intervention of God, as seen in these instances, for the benefit of the neophytes, just as the sacraments did.

The scene of the Resurrection is a rare version, with no angel and with an enormous closed sarcophagus and the three holy women arriving, holding candles; two stars replace the acroteria of the sarcophagus. It is more than a half-century earlier than the other representations of the same subject at Rome, and more than a century earlier than other representations of the subject by the incident of the arrival of the holy women at the tomb (see below, p. 123). The painters who worked at Dura must have had an iconographic repertory that did not entirely correspond to that available to their Roman counterparts. And if we observe the interpretation of the gospel scenes, we have the same impression of a tradition that is certainly quite close, but distinct: the miracle of the paralytic is presented in two successive episodes (before and after the cure). These scenes, as well as the scene of St. Peter drawn from the waters of the lake, are treated in a more descriptive manner than the salvations of the catacombs, although, as we will see, this does not necessarily mean that they derive from detailed illustrations of manuscripts of the Scriptures. Finally, two different styles are used for the images in the nave, depending upon their location: those on the upper part of the walls (the miracles) are rapidly sketched on a white ground with small figures that are drawn rather than painted; those on the socle (the Resurrection can be identified) have monumental proportions and present large figures completely painted and worked into a solemn and majestic rhythm. These differences in the translation of subjects according to their position on the walls were inherited by the Christian painters of Dura from their pagan predecessors, perhaps from the mural painters of the eastern provinces of Europe, to judge from some examples of frescoes of a similar kind (of the third and fourth centuries) at Kerch, once the Greek colony of Panticapaeum, on the Black Sea. They have the same graphic sketches on a white ground at the top of the walls and sometimes the same monumental figures on the socle.

So far as we can judge from what remains of the baptistery of Dura, it reveals primarily the fact, unsuspected before this discovery, that rooms devoted to the celebration of the Christian cult and decorated with iconographic paintings existed almost a century before the edicts of tolerance. The style of these mural paintings and the manner of adapting figurative painting to the walls prove that their authors followed usages known from earlier pagan examples in the eastern provinces of the

Empire. But the painters of the baptistery of Dura followed a system in the choice and distribution of the Christian subjects that they represented, and this surely implies that there existed in the region of Dura slightly earlier Christian antecedents (perhaps coinciding in date with the earliest Christian paintings in the catacombs of Rome). The Roman catacomb paintings resemble the Dura frescoes in a general way, as much as contemporary works created within the Greco-Roman world resemble each other. But the relationship, as we have said, is not very close, since Dura's tendency is toward more descriptive figurations, while the Roman catacombs long held to image-signs that were as abbreviated as possible. But at Naples and Nola the Christian frescoes of the same period were more descriptive, closer to the type of Dura. Furthermore, the painters of Dura were entirely indifferent to the decorative effects which the Roman painters never lost from view. It seems reasonable to suppose that paintings in a room above ground, of easy access to the whole Christian community, might naturally tend to become more descriptive than would the paintings in funerary hypogea and that certain features of the art of Dura may not necessarily correspond to any regional feature.

The iconography of the funerary cycles of the third century at Rome and in Provence and that of the baptismal cycle at Dura are related, as we have said, by their common religious theme: the power of God which assures the salvation of true believers. In both cases, the Good Shepherd (taken from the Gospels) is depicted, and stories of salvation drawn from the Scriptures are also evoked, forming a counterpart to the prayers of the services. It would seem that in both cases the iconography says the same thing, or nearly the same; and, in spite of the difference in the offices which inspired the iconography, the images correspond to the respective offices. All of which means that the inspiration of the first Christian art is liturgical, and belongs exclusively to those offices which concern the individual rather than the entire community: the services of baptism and the burial of the dead.

It is thus that we can define the religious significance of this art, its field of action, and the period of its appearance. Its utilitarian character implies an impetus coming from the faithful, which means that it need not have been inspired or even approved by the clergy; and these considerations seem satisfactory to the mind which marvels at the sudden flowering of Christian art. Yet one may still wonder whether, after all, there was not some intervention by an ecclesiastical authority, even though all that separates the works of Rome from those of Dura—that is, their independent experience—argues against such intervention on a high administrative level. One group of works invents an iconography for funerary use; the other, an iconography for baptismal use. Each group has its own iconographic resources—on the Roman side, symbolical scenes of classical inspiration, like that of the philosopher who teaches to the Christian the truth revealed by the Gospels, or classical

motifs such as the shepherd and his flock in a natural setting. Whereas in Rome the first Christian artists were inspired by the forms created by their pagan counterparts, at Dura there is no direct carry-over from classical art. The absence of surviving antecedents in the region of Dura for the decoration of the baptistery makes it impossible to affirm that its paintings depended upon local tradition; the possibility that local antecedents once existed should not, however, be excluded. We have already mentioned the funerary mural paintings in Kerch, in the Crimea, which are very close in time to the paintings of the Dura baptistery and which show that certain traits of these paintings were familiar to the painters of the eastern provinces of the Empire (the socle with large personages and, over against this, very small scenes sketched higher up).

Briefly, then, there is some reason to believe that the first experiments in Christian iconographic creation—at Rome, on the one hand, and in Roman Mesopotamia, on the other—may have come about through local initiative, with the means available and even following the dictates of a slightly different religious thought. If this were true, it would not be surprising to find, for example, that these attempts did not spread throughout the Empire to the entire body of Christian communities.

But there are other considerations with which we can counter these observations, and they seem to argue in favor of a concentrated action. The most notable is the synchronism: for it is in the Severan period that, at Rome and at Dura, the first Christian iconographic ensembles were realized. And since this surprising flowering, for which nothing in the preceding two hundred years has prepared us, was not at all in the nature of things Christian, one can justifiably assume the intervention of ecclesiastical authority or, at least, a connection between the Western and the Eastern branches of this imagery. The two ensembles may have been created either as a result of the same decision or by the influence of one upon the other. These considerations have a tempting appearance of truth.

Such is the situation when one considers the question strictly within the domain of Christian iconography. It changes if the field of observation is enlarged, for, among traditionally aniconic religions, Christianity was not alone in providing itself with an iconography in the first half of the third century. If it is surprising enough to find Christianity creating a religious figurative art after being for two centuries a religion without images, it is still more astonishing to see a shift in the same direction among the Jews. Many centuries had passed, between Moses and Septimius Severus, during which the Jews rejected any figuration of a sacred character and even any image of living beings. But now, in the first half of the third century—that is, at the same time as the earliest Christian figurations—there appear, one after another, creations of Jewish religious iconography. The first

Jewish experiments are similar in character to the Christian: there are the symbolic reliefs of the synagogues of Capernaum in Galilee, followed by other analogous but later examples; the coins of Apamea, in Phrygia, struck by the Jewish community of that city and showing a scene of Noah and his wife praying before the ark which they have just left; and finally, before 243, the great cycle of religious frescoes on the walls of the synagogue of Dura, this same Dura where we saw the frescoes of the Christian baptistery.

Whatever the degree of relationship between the two iconographies, Jewish and Christian, may have been, and the causes of the interdependence of their images, the historian of Christian iconography is faced with the question: Why did the two traditionally aniconic religions, which existed side by side within the Empire, equip themselves with a religious art at the same period? In spite of all that separated them, these Jewish and Christian communities, though enemies, were far from being impervious to influences from one another. There are a thousand proofs of this. We know especially to what extent Christian liturgy, in its beginnings, was inspired by the liturgy of the synagogue in its form and content (aside from its sacraments). Moreover, the synchronism of the appearance of sacred iconography among both Jews and Christians would be most easily explained if it were admitted that these occurrences had the same origin. If this were true, the coincidence of the dates of the earliest Christian images at Rome and at Dura would not depend upon some decision of a Christian authority, but would reflect a movement in favor of religious iconography which affected Jews and Christians alike. To understand this development, one would have to consider the two iconographies together.

To undertake an analysis of the works of Jewish iconography of the third century would take us too far afield without sufficiently forwarding our study of Christian iconography. But since one cannot understand the beginnings of Christian iconography without knowing the contemporary Jewish works, let us pause over several of these Jewish images to get an idea of the religious intention behind them.

46 On the lintel reliefs of the synagogues of Jaffa and Capernaum (and on other
47 later similar pieces), there are symbolic figurations: the seven-branched candlestick of the Temple, the star, the crown, and also the eagle, several quadrupeds, and the palms of paradise. Just as the Christian iconography of Rome showed the influence of Greco-Roman art, that of the synagogues of Galilee retained as a matter of course many of the decorative motifs of the neighboring temples of Baal. But let us note particularly the content of these first Jewish figurations. They are symbols which can be reproduced, isolated, in any location, to show the presence of the Jewish cult. In other words, it is the same principle whose Christian counterpart we know in the symbol-object: the anchor, dove, lamb, etc.

48 The image of Noah and his wife beside the ark, which one sees on the coins

of Apamea in Phrygia, presents no difficulty of religious interpretation: it is commemorative, since it evokes the celebrated relic of this city, a fragment of Noah's ark, which the very powerful Jewish community of Apamea had in its charge. The translation into iconographic terms of an event recounted in the Scriptures was in this case inspired by a tangible vestige of the event. Nothing similar occurs in Christian art before the fourth century; here the Jews are in advance of the Christians. They took their inspiration from the commemorative iconography of Roman numismatics, replacing the usual images of the local pagan sanctuary and its idols by the representation of the event commemorated through their relic of the ark.

The two Jewish experiments which we have mentioned are contemporary, but they are so different that it is vain, I think, to attempt to trace them to a single initiative. Like the Christians of the third century, the Jews were animated by a desire to create images, but the realizations, in Galilee and in Phrygia, due to local conditions, are quite dissimilar.

Finally, there is the major experiment, that of the frescoes of the synagogue of Dura, which Professor C. H. Kraeling is probably right in connecting with the strong upsurge of Jewish activities in more than one cultural domain in and around Edessa, capital of one of the small kingdoms situated between the Roman Empire and Persia. I will restrict my remarks to certain particularities of these paintings that have a direct bearing on Christian studies.

These frescoes combine certain symbols of the kind we have seen in the reliefs of Capernaum in Galilee and Biblical scenes comparable to that of the Apamean coins. In this respect the synagogue at Dura resembles the Christian catacombs and sarcophagi of Rome, which show an analogous combination of Christian symbols and scenes drawn from the Scriptures. However, in contrast to the great majority of the Christian scriptural images of the third century, which are abbreviated and summary, those of the synagogue at Dura are treated as large framed pictures which describe in much detail the scene represented. And there is another essential difference: the iconographic ensemble of the Dura synagogue is unfolded on the walls of a room used for the daily liturgical ceremonies of the religious community—an enterprise which has no Christian counterpart until long after the Peace of the Church. It should not be forgotten that at the beginning of the third century the Jewish faith was authorized in the Empire, whereas the Christian religion was not, and would become legal only under Constantine.

Still more important is the difference in the significance of this image cycle, compared with the Christian cycles of the third century. As we have said, these were always concerned with the salvation of the individual. But at Dura it is the destiny of the chosen people which is the subject of the ensemble. The choice and arrangement of images show this clearly, and in this respect, too, the Jewish iconography

of Dura is in advance of the iconographic programs of the Christian churches by more than a century. Without going into detail, let us recall a small number of scenes which leave no doubt of this. Among the symbolic subjects, the Temple with the Ark and the lion of Judah with Jacob's dual benediction on the tribes of Israel are predominant. Among the narrative scenes, there are: Moses leading the chosen people across the Red Sea; an entire cycle dedicated to the Ark and the Temple, which evokes a chapter in the history of God acting among his people; the story of Esther, the benefactress of her people (here, the triumph of her brother Mordecai); the resurrection of the dead before the eyes of Ezekiel; and finally, in the center of these scenes which have for their anonymous hero the chosen people as a whole, compositions showing David the king anointed by Samuel or David enthroned. Beyond all question the great iconographic program on the walls of the synagogue of Dura is concerned with the religious interests of the whole of Israel; and whether it envisages the past or the Messianic future, its subject is always the destiny of the chosen people.

What aspect of the religious history of Israel is brought to the fore by these paintings? It is the solicitude of God for his people, throughout the centuries, and, by contrast, the punishment inflicted by the God of Israel on the enemies of his chosen ones and on traitors. Nothing is more characteristic of Judaism than this assimilation of the people of God to Israel and of the final glory of God to the Messianic kingdom of Judah on earth.

But if Christian universalism set aside the national formula of the religious iconography of the Dura synagogue, iconography after Constantine, as we will see, was to seize upon the fruitful theme of the kingdom of God and to develop it in its own manner, which was not that of the Jewish paintings of Dura. However, these paintings, so different otherwise from Christian images of the third century, are at one with them in attempting to show, through each of the images, the power of God and the felicity of the faithful (here taken collectively, as the chosen people). Here, too, as for the paintings and funerary reliefs and the frescoes of the baptistery of Dura, one can cite prayers which appeal for salvation in enumerating the past favors of God (Jewish prayers such as Psalm 118). In other words, this iconography has a religious meaning very like that which we have seen in the Christian cycles of the same period, except that the salvation in question concerns the entire people chosen by Yahweh.

We can turn this conclusion around and express it the other way; an iconographic program of this kind signified, for whoever contemplated these frescoes, that the God of the Jews is great and the people who are faithful to him have not ceased to enjoy his blessings through the centuries. God has saved his people from many different calamities, he has raised the dead and blessed Israel since the begin-

ning of time. Here again we find the theme of comfort and assurance of protection and salvation which is the theme of the Christian images of the same period; and if one is concerned with the communal life on earth and the other with the salvation of the individual after death, still all these images, Jewish and Christian, are plainly intended to comfort the beholder, and either to strengthen him in his faith or to lead him into the Christian or the Jewish religion.

These observations may help us to see more clearly the reasons for the simultaneous birth of Christian and Jewish iconography in the Severan period. In both cases, the first imagery of which we have any record asserts salvation through reference to the experience of the past. An art which adopts this program serves to hold the faithful or to bring in new converts. Since one of them, the Jewish, seems much more evolved iconographically, and the other, the Christian, better adapted to impress different ethnic groups and at the same time more sensitive to the appeal of the growing spiritualism of the third century, it is surely the new Jewish iconography which seems to have been created first and the equally new iconography of the Christians afterward. And since each of these religions promises salvation, there is a strong possibility that the first Christian iconography came into being as a response or a counterpart to the concurrent Jewish iconography born a short while before.

Much of this is a hypothesis, which is perhaps destined never to be proved. But, whatever the exact order of their appearance may have been, the Jewish and Christian iconographies began at the same period and probably more or less simultaneously, at diverse points in the Empire, where Jewish and Christian communities lived side by side. One of these centers was Rome, where the Jews were far less active in iconography than the Christians, and the Christians much more open to classical influence. The two arts came into being side by side at the beginning of the third century in the eastern Empire, in the area between Palestine and the Persian border. In this region, it is the Jewish iconography which seems predominant and which draws more than one new element from its contact with local Semitic and Iranian art (the one flourishing in the eastern provinces of the Empire, the other practiced on the far side of the nearby Persian frontier and spreading into the neighboring regions of the Empire). The Christians of the East, less powerful and probably less numerous, began with an art imported from within the Empire, an art much less affected by Iranian influences than the art of their neighbors the Jews.

In the early third century the Roman East and Persian Upper Mesopotamia were experiencing a time of exceptional iconographic fermentation, which extended to the art of several different faiths. On the Roman side, we have just mentioned the Christian and the Jewish activity. On the Persian side, between about 240 and 270, a new religion, that of Manes, was spreading its propaganda with the

aid of images. Starting at Ctesiphon and moving from there into provinces that bordered the Empire, like the region of Dura, Manes was the first to apply this method, for which the Zoroastrians later reproached him; the method is of particular interest to us, since in late antiquity the Jewish and the Christian missions were accomplished with no recourse to images. Gathering the written testimonies, some contemporary and Manichean, others of later date and sometimes by the hands of enemies of Manes (for example, a Moslem like Firdausi in the *Shah Namah*), we can establish the following subjects for the pictures which Manes showed to his auditors: images of God; images of the Last Judgment showing the judge, the good rewarded, and the evil damned. It is amusing to think that the second occurrence of a mission which sought to impress possible converts through the spectacle of the Last Judgment concerns the Christian mission to England of St. Augustine, four centuries after Manes. We know that Manes' successors added other images to those which Manes used, notably that of the bema or throne, which symbolized his passion and his ascension, as well as the portrait of Manes, which indicated his invisible presence at the head of his church. Placed near the bema (I imagine, on the bema), the portrait of Manes was the object of veneration or of worship. To illustrate this Manichean iconography, there remain only some miniatures, much later in date and showing strong Chinese influence, made for a manuscript written in Turkistan.

As is well known, the mission of Manes, starting from Ctesiphon, spread rapidly (in spite of the persecutions which supervened) to Persia and toward Central Asia and throughout the Roman Empire, even to Africa and Italy. This iconography must have accompanied the installation of Manichean communities everywhere and provoked repercussions. The late Wilhelm Koehler thought that the great and scholarly iconography which was created at Rome at the beginning of the fifth century under the impetus afforded it by Pope Leo the Great was a response to the very effective propaganda of Manicheism in the West.

The arts of the West encountered Manicheism only around the year 400. In the eastern provinces of the Empire and in Persia, similar and equally violent contacts occurred in the second half of the third and in the fourth century. Modern scholars in the field of iconography in Iran (Nyberg, Wikander, Puech) admit that it is to the flowering of Manicheism, with its books of divine revelation, its church, and its propaganda, that we owe the codification of traditional Mazdaism and the organization of the Zoroastrian Church, which became the state church of Persia. Further studies will, I hope, show whether the official art of this state religion, as we see it under the Sassanians, also was a reply to Manichean iconography.

We have no reason to believe that the Manichean mission, with imagery as

a propaganda instrument, provoked the Jews and Christians of the Levant, inviting them to abandon their traditional rejection of figurative art. Such a hypothesis would have a very good chance of satisfying everyone and of providing an answer to the question still before us, that is: Admitting that the Christians followed the Jews and that both iconographies originated at the beginning of the third century, why did they do so *then*, rather than earlier or later? The Manichean factor would explain everything, especially since it introduced imagery as propaganda. But—happily for the truth to which this hypothesis would have done a disservice—the dates make this answer impossible: the first Jewish and Christian images occur certainly soon after or even slightly before the year 200, while the earliest Manichean images cannot be earlier than about 240.

The Manichean evidence can, however, be used in two ways. Manes could have been led to invent an imagery for the religion which he founded, and to make it an instrument of propaganda, because the Jews and the Christians, his closest neighbors in the domain of religion, had, both of them, just created one. If this was so, one should expect to find a similarity in the three systems of imagery, particularly (which interests us the most) in the religious value one could see in them and in the uses for which they were designed in the religious life of the three communities. But, in the present state of our knowledge, all that can be asserted is that Manes judged imagery to be capable of expressing ideas and of assisting the propagation of the religion which he had founded and which he preached, beginning in Upper Mesopotamia around the year 240. The imagery that he created was destined for the crowds, and the role that the Last Judgment played in it would confirm this.

The second way of using the Manichean evidence is even more prudent. Without presupposing a link between the creation of Manichean iconography and the slightly older Jewish and Christian iconographies, one would limit oneself to pointing out the purely chronological closeness of the beginnings of all these iconographies. Whatever the order of their appearance, there is no question that they followed one another at short intervals. Three iconographies of three revealed religions appear almost simultaneously, and in each instance some of the earliest of its works of art now known—all directed to the average spectator—are found in the same frontier region between the Roman Empire and Persia, in the area of the upper Euphrates. At the beginning of the third century, religions, sects, confessional and philosophical-religious groups, favored by the Pax Romana, lived freely together in the cities of the Empire, and in the eastern provinces in particular. Roman law and prosperity favored this, as well as the intense agitation within these groups which organized, dissolved, clashed, and tore from each other their not very stable membership. It was also Greco-Roman custom which, in this world more or less won over to Hellenism, favored a recourse to art as a means of expressing and

propagating ideas; and the competition among these religions which existed side by side spurred on the initiators and creators of iconographies for each of them. The more these religions competed with each other, the more the iconographies of which they availed themselves resembled each other, because each expressed itself in terms of the same iconographic language of Greek classicism, their differences being differences only of detail.

The excavations at Dura have provided an excellent material illustration of this state of affairs and particularly of the impressive proximity of several religious iconographies, different from each other but similar in form. One has only to look at the frescoes of the sanctuaries lined up one after another along the walls of Dura: the Christian baptistery has not only the synagogue as a neighbor but also a temple of the Palmyrene gods, a Mithraeum, and the sanctuaries of Atargatis, Artemis Azzanathcona, a Semitic Zeus, another local Artemis, and Adonis. Of different dates, but not very far apart, all the paintings in these sanctuaries existed simultaneously at the time of the destruction of Dura in 243. A few years later, there would have been a Manichean sanctuary, too.

The singular spectacle afforded by the view of the ruins of the ramparts of Dura is not only suggestive for a historian of Roman customs and the religions of late antiquity. It also explains the circumstances under which the religious arts, vestiges of which we see at Dura, were born and suggests the intentions of the initiators of these iconographies. The existence of imagery in the practice of some religious groups called forth the creation of other systems of imagery, all of them invented under conditions of competition and expressly for the adherents, either assured or possible, of the respective groups. The religions most firmly aniconic, Judaism and Christianity, did not resist the competition, which made its effects felt eventually in an emphasis on the distinction between the two faiths. In this respect, it is striking that at Dura the Christians gave priority to evangelical themes (whereas at Rome they emphasized motifs of the Old Testament, which they held in common with the Jews). At Dura, Christians and Jews were in competition, and their iconographic repertoires underlined what was specific to each of them.

II. The Assimilation of Contemporary Imagery

In the Introduction, I spoke of the close relationship that iconography bears to language: iconography constructs an image as one builds up a sentence or a discourse, by using elements of different origin and combining them according to practices comparable to the rules of grammar. In the present chapter and the following ones, this general observation will guide us in the study of a certain number of examples of this kind of iconographic creation. Our particular aim will be to define the iconographic terms, corresponding to the words and locutions of language, that were employed in Paleo-Christian art. We will begin with the most common and banal terms of the period which saw the formation of the Paleo-Christian iconographic language. We will then turn to the borrowings that this imagery made from the vocabulary of the official art of the Roman state. Throughout, we will observe the adaptation of these borrowings to the Paleo-Christian context.

In any image that a painter or sculptor makes, the part that is properly his own is minimal. The rest belongs to the vocabulary of the current language of the visual arts, either the language in general use or, sometimes, a special technical language already established. It is on this condition that an image-maker is understood by others, the obvious aim of anyone who expresses himself whether it be in images or in words. Christian iconography in late antiquity follows the general rule, and the considerable portion of it that consists of clichés or of less banal but still common forms of the art of the time is particularly evident because all these features can be observed in pagan works, often works earlier than the first Christian images.

There is, first, the category of common forms and motifs, those which are used without reflection and which one cannot get along without. In the realm of iconography these are the equivalents of the commonplaces of moralists or theologians. To this category belong most of the forms which concern the representation of the human figure, which is the central subject of all ancient Christian images, including figurations of Christ, Mary, and the saints. Thus primitive Christian

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iconography is peopled with figures that necessarily show one or another of the most common postures: standing, seated, or reclining. Pagan images and Paleo-Christian images of the standing, seated, or recumbent figure employ the same devices to represent these postures; the sameness is not a question of the Christian image-makers borrowing from their pagan counterparts, but of their using, in common with their contemporaries, a single language of visual forms. This observation holds for all the motifs that we will enumerate.

For the standing figure, this identity can be seen by a comparison of the row of figures at the bottom of the walls of the hypogeum of the Aurelii in Rome (Viale Manzoni, third century) with the very similar isolated figures of the philosopher type or the apostles and prophets in the catacombs. As for the reclining figures, it was pointed out long ago that certain Jonahs lying under the pergola resemble the reclining figures of Endymion on pagan sarcophagi. Here the imitation is perhaps deliberate. But it is not because of deliberate imitation that other figures of the recumbent Jonah also resemble pagan sculptures of nude youths stretched out in the sun—for example, those on Roman sarcophagi which represent a dead child. The unaccompanied seated figure is rarer, but one finds figures in a similar pose in various scenes of assembly and in compositions of the philosopher type. Whether such an image is pagan or Christian, the figure—frequently bald—is shown seated frontally or sideways, wearing an exomis tunic, and bent over a phylactery. Pagan or Christian, the image is practically the same, the resemblance going beyond the seated pose of the sage and extending to his physical type and his action (reading in the roll held before him).

The same thing holds for the figure in prayer with extended arms: Christian art made the orant one of its favorite subjects and quickly developed the type. But there exist pagan counterparts, orants that are allegories of piety; and nothing distinguishes the two groups iconographically. The gesture of a single forearm raised can have the sense of prayer, but it is more often a gesture of surprise or, on the level of ritual, of acclamation or bearing witness (it is still the gesture that accompanies the taking of an oath). Pagan versions of this gesture, for example, on the Great Cameo of France, in the Treasury of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, on the base of the column of Antoninus Pius in Rome, or on consular diptychs (the gesture of the personifications of cities toward the consul), have their Christian counterparts in, for instance, the Mother of God carrying the Child, in the papyrus of the Alexandrian Chronicle at Moscow, or on ivories like those on the throne of Maximian (prophets as “witnesses” of evangelical events). But it is the gesture of the orator, or simply that which accompanies discourse, that is the most frequent and the most banal, whether for the pagan sages, orators, and magistrates or for Christ and his disciples or for the prophets in Christian iconography. It is this gesture which later

was confused with that of benediction and which, because of this interpretation, had a particularly lasting and illustrious place in Christian iconography.

Among the common iconographic locutions of the Paleo-Christian period one must also include the small *volumen*, or scroll, that is carried by so many figures, pagan and Christian: philosophers, authors, teachers. The exomis tunic, which leaves one shoulder and part of the torso bare, was used for representations of Christ and other persons shown as philosophers (the author of the “true philosophy” and his forerunners and disciples). But the nudity revealed by this garment must have limited its use in the Christian repertory of formulas. By contrast, the other method of representing a noble personage, whether sage, poet, or Roman magistrate, had unlimited service in Christian art of the period. In this convention the figure is covered with a toga or other mantle, its drapery arranged according to the usages of the classical period. Christ, the prophets, and the apostles were to retain this costume indefinitely as a kind of uniform that distinguishes them from all other figures in Christian images.

As there were no authentic portraits available, the image-makers gave their subjects noble and expressive faces, either beardless or with beards of different types. Examples occur in the catacombs and even more often on sarcophagi of the fourth century, where images of Christ among the apostles are frequent. Comparison with the pavement mosaics at Apamea (Syria), the mural paintings of the hypogeum of the Aurelii, including the figure of a *togatus*, the miniatures of the seven physicians in the Dioscorides manuscript at the National Library in Vienna, and also with the portrait heads of profane sculpture of the Roman Imperial period sufficiently demonstrates the origin of the noble and expressive heads of the apostles and prophets. The Christian image-makers endowed these personages with the heads “*habituées aux hautes pensées*” (Stendhal) that the sages of pagan art of the Imperial epoch inspired. Yet this did not prevent certain of these “pseudo portraits” from retaining some traits indefinitely while discarding others. This is the case for representations of St. Andrew, and especially of St. Peter and St. Paul, of which the earliest versions—profiles on bronze medallions—go back to the third century. A certain kind of pseudo portrait was created under these conditions, evolving from the noble and expressive heads (clearly not portraits) that we mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph.

In groups of such figures as the disciples with their master or the apostles with Jesus the arrangement is no less conventional. The apostles are placed according to age, and in principle all ages are represented, beginning with the old men and going down to the youngest, shown beardless. Thus Philip and Thomas as youths end the line of the twelve apostles. But meanwhile, and especially before these last images were established, the Christians made frequent use of another formula con-

stantly found in the art of the time, that of making all the figures they represented invariably youthful, depriving them as it were of age: Moses or Noah or Isaiah, Jesus or St. Paul thus appear as young, beardless men.

The pagans were very fond of images where young children or *putti* played the roles of adults in representations of the circus or of combat, the chase, or various kinds of work, or even in religious scenes. At the very beginning of Christian art, some of the Christian image-makers adopted this playful genre (which makes one think of eighteenth-century French art) for certain scenes of symbolic grape-gathering (in allusion to the "vine of the Lord" and to communion) such as are found, for instance, among the mosaics of S. Costanza at Rome; and on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus *putti* are shown harvesting wheat. A very early fresco in the catacomb of Domitilla in Rome shows Cupid and Psyche as *putti*, although here again the figures are symbolic (Psyche in paradise is the soul in the afterlife). One might cite also an enigmatic Christian painting in the newly discovered catacombs of the Via Latina where five *putti* in tunics, holding palm branches, stand before a seated figure. But the *putti* genre was not very popular among the Christians, who quickly replaced the little children by adolescents. This version of the formula of youth must have seemed more acceptable; for its association with an abstract idea—in this case, the eternal—was in accordance with the image-signs of the Christian funerary cycles, while at the same time it did not oblige Christian imagery to put aside the predominantly serious air which is so characteristic of it. Thus, here at the beginning of Christian art, we have a phenomenon often observed by linguists in their area: in passing from one language to another or in transmission from one generation to another, a term, if it lives, changes its form and its semantic value, and we see in iconography, as in language, a shifting of form and of meaning.

Youthfulness in all the figures of a scene places it outside of time: all the actors in the event remain eternally young. Many texts of the Middle Ages have retained this thought, which has a corollary in another notion that is at the same time like and opposite: the eternal can also be pictured in the guise of a mature man, since the full-bearded face, the abundant coiffure, suggest a long span of time and fullness of power. The image which corresponds iconographically to this formula was ascribed to Christ, especially where he is shown in majesty, as the omnipotent and omnipresent lord forever. The similarity between these figurations of Christ and the traditional images of the sovereign gods of late antiquity—Jupiter, Neptune, or Pluto—has long been recognized. There is certainly a relationship, and it appears likely that the Christian image-makers used this type of head to signify the all-powerful sovereignty of Christ. It may be difficult to envisage this borrowing in actual practice, since no Christian could have thought of Christ with the head of a pagan god. But, as we have frequently said in these pages, it is not a question of a



I Ezekiel's vision of God combined with the Ascension of Christ. Miniature, Rabbula Gospels, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence [35]



II Pastoral scene. Miniature, manuscript of Virgil, Vatican Library [36]

direct loan that Christian art received from a separate art, that of the idolaters. The powerful head with long beard and abundant hair was a part of the repertory of the art of the period, and both the Christians and the pagans used it, as one can use the same word in different senses. Christians and pagans did indeed use the same verbal terms, for example, to designate the omnipotence of God or of a god, but the meaning of the terms was not necessarily the same.

There is an analogous case in such familiar scenes of the art of the period as the ascension of a god or a hero, where fiery steeds carry his chariot obliquely across the heavens. The personified Sun and Moon and the emperor in his posthumous apotheosis were represented in this specific fashion, which was familiar to the artists of antiquity long before the Christian artists in their turn took it over in order to represent either the Ascension of Elijah or that of Christ. With certain inevitable adaptations, such as were also made for the ascensions in mythology and in Imperial imagery, Christian iconography adopted this formula for its own, once again making use of the common visual forms of its environment.

In connection with representations of ascension, Christian iconography also made use of another type of image—the triumphal chariot, shown frontally. The art of late antiquity knew many scenes of this kind, in which the victorious emperor was represented in the chariot as charioteer. Such scenes served as a point of departure for a figuration of Ezekiel's vision of God combined with Christ's ascension, a miniature in the Gospels of Rabbula. Ezekiel's description mentions the wheels of the chariot of God, four animals (instead of four horses), and the rapid movement of the divine chariot. Except for the detail that the four animals of the vision surround God in his chariot, instead of taking the places that were customarily reserved for horses, the Christian ascension is still an iconographic imitation—this time a representation of the chariot climbing vertically (and not obliquely) into the heavens. In the earliest Christian images of Ezekiel's vision—for instance, at Bawit—the axles and the wheels of the chariot, as well as the attendant prophet, are still represented, confirming the dependence of this type of Christian image on pagan figurations of ascension.

One branch of late classical iconography furnished a great number of motifs for the first generations of Christian image-makers: this was pastoral imagery, whose principal motifs are the shepherd, his dog, his flock of lambs or goats or, more rarely, his herd of cows, or a rocky landscape with a few decorative trees and sometimes a few rustic buildings. In the Roman period, such visions of pastoral calm were the delight of city dwellers, and in mural decorations in particular they were frequent. Paintings of this kind are preserved in the ruins of the Palatine and also in the elegant ancient stuccoes from a Roman house found at the Farnesina and in a great many frescoes, pavement mosaics, and reliefs going back to the first centuries

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II after Christ. Illustrations for Virgil's works afforded Roman painters opportunity to treat the subject of the shepherd with his flock. And pagan funerary art took it up also, in its turn, and used it often in its evocations of the ideal sojourn in the after-life. Connections between these figurations and the earliest Christian versions were all the more natural because Christianity in its funerary art—the most important branch of Christian art until the fifth century—itself reserved an important place for the subject of the shepherd and his flock. Christian iconography was certainly led to this subject by the Scriptures, which compare Jesus to the Good Shepherd and Christians to the flock that he guards. But the existence of the same subject in pagan sepulchral art made it inevitable that these idyllic pastoral images should frequently be transferred to Christian sarcophagi. Both the pagan and the Christian figurations are very similar, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other. Visually, the vocabulary and the sentiment are the same. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that a certain figure of a shepherd who leans on his staff amid his sheep in a miniature in a manuscript of Virgil in the Vatican reappears on the façade of a Christian sarcophagus. The Christian Good Shepherd naturally belonged to this iconographic family, and it is not uninteresting to find such a figure not only on pagan sarcophagi but in the paintings of non-Christian mausoleums like that of Trebius Justus or in the hypogeum of the Aurelii—works contemporary with the earliest Christian images of the Good Shepherd, where the shepherd appears with other paintings that have nothing Christian about them.

On a pagan sarcophagus in the basilica of S. Sebastiano on the Via Appia, a more interesting motif is added to the usual pastoral image. Before a small cottage, one sees a family of shepherds; the shepherdess, seated, holds a young child in her arms. The sculpture is of the third century. For the historian of Christian iconography it is very precious, because it furnishes an example of the image of mother and child as it must have been commonly represented at this time; such a composition, among others, was used by the first image-makers for Mary holding the Child Jesus. The version on the sarcophagus of S. Sebastiano is the one which was to give rise to the iconographic type of the Byzantine Theotokos Hodegetria (cf. below, p. 84). A pagan funerary stele in the Archaeological Museum in Aquileia shows us another image of mother and child, but this time the two figures, represented frontally, with the child on the axis of the mother's body, are enclosed in a medallion and cut at shoulder height. Nevertheless, the group is quite natural. And here again the composition is of a type which served as a point of departure for a Byzantine icon of the Virgin, the one called the Nikopea. At a more advanced stage in a similar evolution one comes across a third image of a mother and child—in a fresco of the fourth century in the catacombs of the Cimitero Maggiore at Rome: this time not only are the two figures placed one before the other frontally but the mother makes

the gesture of the orant. It is probable, if not certain, that they already represent Mary with the Child Jesus. Except for one detail (the child is not in the posture of an orant), the same image served as the iconographic scheme for the Byzantine icon the Blacherniotissa (the Virgin orant standing with the Child before her, whom she does not touch and who is often enclosed in a medallion).

One could easily extend this list of examples of Christian images, and even of entire categories of these images, which resemble pagan figurations of the same period. In most cases, these figurations were commonly employed in pagan art and belong to a repertory of commonplace forms which the Christians used as one uses the common words of daily language—without deliberately choosing them. In other cases—the pastoral images, the philosophers, the ascensions or apotheoses, the groups of mother and child—it is the subject chosen which led to the utilization of a particular form or motif derived from analogous pagan representations. It is not that the art of paganism made a contribution that came to form the Christian iconographic language; rather, all of these images show the normal effects of the employment of terms, or motifs, common to a single visual language, a language whose terms were used by all makers of images—sometimes in a new sense.

The examples that have been mentioned demonstrate that contemporary motifs and formulas played a large part in Paleo-Christian art, which was nothing else than one branch of the art of the Imperial epoch. There were as many comparable examples in the other branches of Imperial art, and this is just as normal as is the presence in the most accomplished literary work of a substantial quantity of words that are in daily use and common to any text or discourse composed in the same language and in the same period. But beyond this common ground shared by all the imagery of the age, Christian iconography in late antiquity shows more specific relationships to certain special areas of contemporary iconography, exactly as a particular technical language can furnish itself with special terms drawn by preference from a certain definite source (such as the military or erotic expressions in religious language). It is thus that Christian iconography drew largely on the conventional motifs of the repertory that previously had served the official art of the Roman state and on those of the secondary currents that flowed from this art.

Many of the preceding observations refer to Christian images before the Peace of the Church under Constantine. The Peace of the Church opened the door to increased activity in the field of Christian iconographic creation. But it seems that this flowering did not follow immediately upon the edicts of tolerance (A.D. 313) and that the first great burst of creation in this domain took one specific direction. Since Christian ideas or forms of devotion could now be freely expressed, one might

expect Christian iconography to have developed in all possible directions. But this did not occur.

It is, of course, true that the reigns of Constantine and his sons, which saw the foundation of the Christian Empire, are, for the history of Christian iconography, nearly a *tabula rasa*. One must not forget the massive destructions. However, if the texts justify this remark with regard to the Christian architecture in the grand style launched by Constantine, written testimony is as mute as the monuments with respect to Christian images which can be attributed to the initiative of Constantine and his court, or of anybody else, during the first half of the fourth century. Aside from the sarcophagi and the catacombs of this period—where the new is relatively unimportant beside the old, and where the Peace of the Church scarcely makes itself felt—one can mention only a few small Biblical images, probably taken from illustrated manuscripts, which, at the end of Constantine's reign, were worked in mosaic in the cupola of the mausoleum of the Emperor's daughter Constantina (S. Costanza, Rome). There is reference also at this period to a statue of the Haemorrhissa at the feet of Christ in a public square of the little Palestinian town of Paneas (see also p. 68).

The extreme paucity of evidence from the days just after the edicts of tolerance possibly reflects the actual situation. In this period, the walls of the churches do not seem to have been decorated with mosaics or frescoes; and nothing indicates the frequent use of Biblical images on portable objects, including the pages of manuscripts. Risky as it may be to draw conclusions from the absence of monuments, it is less dangerous here than in many other cases, because there have remained to us from the same period (the first half of the fourth century) an appreciable number of profane images: the frescoes of the Constantinian palace at Trier, including portraits (one of them identified as the Empress); the series of triumphal and military reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, near the Roman Forum, and on the numerous Constantinian medals; and the illustrated Calendar of 354.

95 Except for the Christian subjects in the vault of the ambulatory of S. Costanza
96 in Rome, one can set over against all these iconographic monuments, profane and
in part frankly pagan (for instance, the images of the Calendar), only the monogram
of Christ, the letters chi and rho combined, that Constantine, after a dream, had
placed on the shields of his soldiers and on the Imperial standard, the labarum. But
let us note, in passing, that this monogram was the equivalent of a symbolic sign,
not a representational image, and that this initiative of the Emperor is in reality a
throwback to the first Christian attempt to create religious figurations, when a small
group of new symbolic signs, the image-signs, was devised. Having broken with
idolatry, Constantine could easily have wished to dissociate representational images
from the religion of Christ. Moreover, the Chi-Rho monogram adopted by

Constantine was particularly appropriate to serve as a symbol of the religion whose destiny he consciously connected with the country of its founder, Christ, and especially with the city of Jerusalem. It is known how much attention Constantine paid to the Palestinian memorials of the earthly career of Jesus. At this time, at Jerusalem and everywhere in the Holy Land, the Jewish tradition of the symbolic sign was a living one and had its application in the art of the synagogue (see p. 25). But, above all, the unique and important contribution of Constantine to Christian iconography—the adoption of the monogram of Christ for the labarum and for the Imperial army—had a practical and military character.

This example of Imperial intervention interests us in two ways. First, we have here a case of Christian iconographic creation whose origins and initiator are known, as well as its place of invention (Rome) and its date (313: the battle of the Milvian bridge). Iconographically, the invention is hardly remarkable; and we can only regret its lack of distinction. Yet here, for once, both written sources and archaeological evidence are exceptionally explicit on the religious significance of the Christian device adopted by Constantine. The device which he put into circulation was a symbol of Christ—I say intentionally Christ and not the Christian religion—and, since its use was reserved for the army, including the Emperor, head of the Roman army—and, in particular, for the Emperor's helmet—this symbol had manifestly a prophylactic value. The army placed itself under the protection and the guidance of Him whose monogram it bore. In other words, the new symbol, born in the years decisive for the victory of the Church and adopted by the Imperial author of this triumph, still had, like everything previously invented and in use in the domain of Christian iconography, a specific function, and was abstract in idea and in this respect archaic. One should add that, like earlier iconography, this symbol also in no way attempted to explain or reflect the dogmas or the high principles of Christianity. The salvation assured by Christ was still there (if not represented, at least implied) as the purpose of the display of this symbol, but with this difference—which anticipates the future of Christian art—that the preservation evoked by the symbol was no longer individual but collective. In the Christian view, collectivity means normally the Church and God's people within it; the formula was introduced after the victory of the Church over the Arian emperors and never disappeared. But in 313 Constantine did not see things with the eyes of the Christian clergy: for him, the collectivity to be protected by the Christian symbol that he had adopted was in fact his army, that is to say, the Empire.

According to a contemporary, Eusebius, this same Constantine had an image made in the vestibule of his new palace at Constantinople; this, while also symbolic, belongs more fully to the realm of iconography since it showed human beings. The personages were Constantine and his sons, represented triumphant over a dragon

stretched at their feet. The image showed the Christian victory of the Emperor over his vanquished enemy, paganism (perhaps especially the idolatry of Licinius, the last of his rival adversaries). In other words, this Constantinian iconography, like the symbol which he introduced into the army, also referred to the political concerns of the Emperor and was connected with military power—with, however, this difference, that it glorified a victory and showed the Emperor himself in the pose of victor.

In numismatics, Constantine and his sons gave impetus to triumphal iconography which, continuing and enriching a Roman tradition, served to fix in the memory of all the image of the invincible monarch, the most powerful on earth. The Christianity of the rulers of the Constantinian dynasty did not prevent them from favoring this ambitious art, which was as foreign as possible to the Christian virtue of humility. In fact, the Christian faith of the emperors gave way to the needs of the state, whose newly recognized Christian mission justified its institutions and its conquests. It is also under Constantine that an iconographic formula was found to define the hierarchy of universal power according to the doctrine of the Christianized Roman monarchy. The motif of a personage enthroned on a seat of gold, inspired by a motif formerly reserved for gods, was retained for the Emperor; although apparently the motif of Imperial majesty remained as before, often in compositions representing the Emperor in majesty or in his apotheosis there appeared above him a Hand, descending from the sky, which blessed or crowned him, thus showing that God in heaven was the celestial sovereign of the earthly sovereign. The motif of the Hand of God stretched from the sky toward a person represented beneath, and thus on earth, was not less well defined iconographically than the motif of Majesty. But if this latter was classical, the Hand came from Jewish art: a century before the Constantinian medals the frescoes of the synagogue of Dura already showed it (the scenes of Moses on Mt. Horeb and of Ezekiel). As I pointed out earlier with regard to the monogram of Christ in Christian iconography, Constantine was interested in Jerusalem and in Jewish antiquities perhaps because of his way of understanding Christianity through the person of Christ. The compositions on these coins and medals showing Majesty and the Divine Hand determined once for all the iconography of an essential idea, which was to remain alive for a thousand years: the idea of the Christian Empire as a reflection of the celestial Empire, the earthly monarch who holds his power from the divine monarch, the cosmocrator. Here, for the first time, attempts were made to define a central and universal fact through iconography, whereas formerly iconography had reflected only religious facts of limited and individual import. However, the underlying thought of the two superimposed monarchies which the Constantinian iconography was meant to illustrate was religious only in part—or was religious in the manner that the late Roman Empire saw such things.

It is extremely significant that the initiative for a Christian iconography of universal import, concerned with essential ideas instead of with the personal anxieties of individuals, comes from the government of the Empire, and follows closely upon its conversion. One could imagine the same initiative directed by the Church, and the probable consequences that such direction would have had in iconographic matters: the Christian community (and not the Roman state) would have been shown to designate the Christian whole; and the essential ideas to be captured in the image would probably have been chosen from those Christological ideas which then animated the best Christian minds—or else would have been taken, more generally, from the dogmas of the Church. But it was not before about the year 400 that the higher clergy of the Church became conscious of what they could attempt in the domain of iconography if they directed it and fashioned it so as to bring it closer to the dogma and at the same time to render it more edifying. In Constantine's time, the Christian clergy were not prepared for a task of this kind in view of the Christian art they knew—the narrow and utilitarian art which the Christians had practiced in the third century. The government of the Empire, on the other hand, had by tradition all the range of artists' workshops and the indispensable artisans at its disposal, as well as the habit of an official iconography, to interpret for general consumption the facts and moves of the reigning sovereign. It is not astonishing, then, that the great iconographic flowering had its beginnings in the Imperial palace, before control of Christian iconography gradually passed to the Church.

This first phase was important, for it gave an effective direction to Christian iconographic creation; in fact, during the fourth century and at the beginning of the fifth, at the very end of antiquity, some purely Christian subjects were interpreted with the help of iconographic formulas from palatine art. As we have seen, the earliest Christian iconography frequently employed motifs and formulas in more or less common use in all branches of contemporary art; what happened in the fourth century is similar, but distinct. All the "vocabulary" of a triumphal or Imperial iconographic language was poured into the "dictionary" which served Christian iconography, until then limited and poorly adapted to treat abstract ideas. The future of Christian iconography was profoundly modified, and what was created then has remained fundamental for Christian art. Still today, thanks to this tenacious tradition, most of us lend to the appearance of divine things the features, more or less confused, of forms that go back to the art of the late Empire. Christ sits solemnly on a throne; he makes the sign of benediction; he is surrounded by angels or saints standing on either side; he wears a crown, and crowns the saints, beginning with Mary, who has herself a throne and wears a formal costume with pearls and precious stones, etc. It is Christian art such as it was in the Empire after Constantine

that has furnished us all these familiar images, just as the usages of this period of the first flowering of Christianity endowed the clergy, later divided as Catholic and Orthodox, with their sacerdotal dress and defined for centuries the movements and gestures of the officiating priests, and left its unforgettable imprint on the liturgy, the rites, and the form of the prayers of the Church.

The mark of Imperial iconography in Christian art is recognizable everywhere and in different ways: appropriation of themes and subjects, borrowings of iconographic details, utilization of more remote models for the creation of analogous images. It is to the theme of the supreme power of God that Imperial art contributed the most, and naturally so, since it was the key theme of all the imagery of the government of the Empire. The official monuments of the late Empire furnished the Christian image-makers with a series of tested models, and they profited from them largely. It is, naturally, through the different applications of the general theme of God's omnipotence—as revealed through Christ—that the influence of Imperial art made itself felt. So far as one can see, the appearances in Christian art of subjects relating to this theme were not simultaneous. They must have been created as they were needed or as the occasion arose.

The oldest of the subjects inspired by this theme is that of Christ confiding the scroll of the Law to St. Peter in the presence of St. Paul. The group of three figures is symmetrical, their appearance solemn. A mosaic—unfortunately greatly restored—at S. Costanza in Rome (about 350?) preserves a very ancient version of this symbolic image—the symbol of the Church in the form of the Law given into the hands of the most venerated of the apostles, St. Peter. The subject also appears in another mosaic, dated a century later, in the cupola of the baptistery of S. Giovanni in Fonte at Naples. A curious detail of this image is the sphere of the universe, which supports the figure of Christ—an iconographic allusion to the universality of his power.

Imperial models for figurations of power are found in such various works as Roman coins—for instance, coins of the Severi, one showing the Emperor crowning a victor and one with the sphere of the universe serving as the Emperor's throne—and a large silver plate of the late fourth century in the museum of the Academy of History in Madrid. In the center of the silver plate, one sees the Emperor Theodosius I giving a scroll to a high officer of the Empire, a ritual gesture which signifies the delegation of power to this dignitary. In other words, Christian iconography inherited from Imperial iconography not only formulas but subjects, and the priority of the Imperial models is proved by the fact that the Imperial images represent real ceremonies, while the Christian figurations are imaginary, their symbolism becoming understandable only because of the ceremonies of the palace.

The same observation is valid for such a scene as that in the apse of S. Vitale in

Ravenna: Christ is seated on the sphere of the world, as its universal sovereign. But this time he presents a martyr's crown to St. Vitalis and receives a model of the church from its founder, St. Ecclesius; the attendant angels present the saints to Christ. The scene is obviously inspired by court ceremonial, and the costume attributed to the martyr saints confirms this. Arbitrarily (without regard for historical fact in the lives of the saints themselves), in the art of the Christian Empire the martyr saints are dressed as dignitaries of the court in fine tunics of white silk covered by heavy cloaks held at the shoulder by a fibula, and with a rectangular ornament (the *tablion*) along the side. Images of martyrs conceived in this fashion are typical and frequent: two are visible in part of a row of saints in a mosaic dating from the seventh century in the chapel of S. Venanzio attached to the Baptistery of St. John at the Lateran. The official character conveyed by the ceremonial costumes is apparent also in the style of this mosaic and of all the mosaics of the period: their uniformity is not due to a lack of artistic skill on the part of the mosaic workers, nor to an Oriental influence on the style, but to a conscious intent to make the presence of the divine or the sacred felt. For in the fourth century, according to the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus, rigidity, fixity, and stonelike inflexibility of mien were indispensable for representations of the Emperor, who thus expressed the superhuman impassibility of the man filled with divine grace. The symbolic rigidity of the sovereign was echoed in the immobility of guards and dignitaries and the calculated cadence of movements during the orchestrated ceremonies—and it is this that was imitated by the image-makers.

The inspiration of official Imperial art is seen in other Christian subjects: for instance, Christ in Majesty, in two variants, one of which is closely related to the subject of the Giving of the Law which I have already mentioned. In this version Christ is standing and holds the cross as the Emperor in his official effigies holds the lance; the apostles on either side make the gesture of veneration. The Giving of the Law is sometimes traced according to the formula that we know. A different version shows Christ enthroned, but the universe on which he sits is not the symbolic sphere, as at S. Vitale; instead, there is a kind of seat placed on the cloak of an allegorical personage who represents the universe exactly as the emperors are represented on the triumphal Arch of Galerius at Salonika. Christ presiding over an assembly of the apostles was one of the first subjects that brought echoes of official art into Christian iconography, for the façades of certain sarcophagi show the scene from the middle of the fourth century. Here, in terms of an iconographic remembrance of the universal Roman monarchy, Christ as cosmocrator is set against the background of a palace or a city. The apostles are seated around Christ, the ensemble taking on the appearance of a representation of a council at the Sacred Palace of the emperors, the *silentium*, or some other assembly where the emperor personally

112 presided. Certain catacomb paintings where Christ is seated alone (or with only a few disciples), while all or most of the disciples remain standing, are perhaps inspired directly by the particular usages of these assemblies.

113 An isolated work, the Barberini terra-cotta plaque now at Dumbarton Oaks, throws further light on the representation of a council of apostles presided over by Christ. This time the assembly is a judicial college, and the scene shows a meeting of the tribunal. The presence of the barristers' chancel, of litigants, and of objects which signify recompense, on the one hand, and punishment, on the other, makes it explicit that this is a scene in a Roman tribunal. But the identity of the judges and the monogram of Christ engraved on the purse that symbolizes recompense designate the tribunal as the Last Judgment. No monument is preserved, so far as I know, which would furnish a counterpart to this scene among purely Imperial works.

114, 115 But, lacking scenes of Imperial tribunals conceived in this manner—in those which we know, except in some late copies, the scene is viewed from the side—we may look again at the reliefs of the Arch of Constantine which show other official assemblies presided over by the Emperor, and notably that of the *largitio* or distribution by the sovereign of pecuniary aid to the crowds which surround him. It is the central part of the relief which is particularly instructive for formal comparisons. The lateral developments, which show officers executing the orders of the sovereign, are special to the subject of the *largitio*. In an earlier Roman relief, in the Archaeological Museum at Brescia, one can see another official assembly conceived and represented in the same manner.

117–119 All the scenes in church apses, especially in the Greek and Semitic East, which show a vision of God by a Biblical prophet represent these theophanies by adapting a formula of Imperial majesty to their particular subject. For the vision itself, only a luminous aureole is added to the usual figure of majesty, and visionaries take the place of the acolytes of the sovereign. The most striking examples of images of this kind are at Hosios David in Salonika, which must be dated in the fifth century. Traditionally, the two personages who accompany the divine vision are recognized as Ezekiel and Habakkuk, although one may question this identification. In the monastic chapels at Bawit, in Egypt, visions of this kind were frequently represented in the sixth century and later, but with the details of the iconography changing almost every time. The aureole of light is always maintained, but the acolytes change. Sometimes Ezekiel fills this role, and sometimes the apostles with the Virgin, the latter group clearly evoking the Ascension.

Two other subjects often rendered in early Christian art reflect Imperial models: the Adoration of the Magi and the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (the latter is iconographically close to the Flight into Egypt). In these images we are concerned with episodes described by the Evangelists. There is no doubt that here the artists

followed the texts. But in their fashion of interpreting them they are influenced by official iconography: that of the offering of crowns and other gifts by the Orientals conquered by the emperor during a celebration of the triumph, and that of the Hellenistic and Roman ceremony of the sovereign visiting a city of his Empire or a conquered (or "liberated") town.

Let us consider a few examples of these two subjects in relation to the corresponding figurations of official art. First, there is the group of Parthians carrying offerings, on the Roman triumphal Arch of Galerius at Salonika, or two groups of conquered barbarians before the Emperor, on the base of the Egyptian obelisk erected by Theodosius I in Constantinople. Over against these, one may place the sculptures of the ambo from St. George's Church at Salonika, including an Adoration of the Magi which resembles more particularly the reliefs of the triumphal arch in the same city of Salonika. The arched niches, the movements of the offering bearers, and their costumes are, in fact, very much alike in the two works. And, finally, let us cite the famous mosaic of the triumphal arch in S. Maria Maggiore, where all the details are direct reflections of official art.

As for the Entry into Jerusalem, it is enough to recall the scene on the Echmiadzin ivory, as well as a Coptic relief with Christ riding an ass between two angels, now in the Berlin Museum, and to compare these renderings with a scene of the *adventus* of Constantius Chlorus on a coin of his reign (305–6) and with the engraving on a plate found at Kerch which represents Constantius II (reigned 337–61) as a horseman between a winged Victory, at the right, and a footsoldier armed with spear and shield.

But what the official art of the Roman state brought to the new iconography of the Christians is not limited to the specific examples I have enumerated, to which many others could easily be added. Moreover, the presence of these impressive realizations had an effect on the general direction taken by Christian art. If Christian iconography reflected so scantily the Christological and dogmatic problems which were the central concerns of the Christian elite after the Peace of the Church, it was because the Christian image-makers had nothing on which to build images devoted to the illustration of these newer and more abstract ideas. Accessible precedents in Imperial iconography, however, gave the image-makers the means of representing symbolically the power of God. But this also meant that the principal object of their imagery was not necessarily the essential thing in the Christian experience, for they did what the iconographic antecedents at their disposal permitted them to do. In brief, Christian iconographic expression at this period was in large part channeled into an imagery familiar to the Imperial authorities who, after having decided upon the conversion of the Empire, governed the Christian state and its official religion.

The erection of the Arcadian columns in Constantinople and the realization of

the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome afford a striking parallel, which helps us to understand better the unity of iconographic invention in the two branches of governmental and ecclesiastic art. Everyone is familiar with the two columns, of Trajan and of Marcus Aurelius, in Rome that are ornamented spirally with historical reliefs. These odd and costly triumphal monuments of the second century were repeated afterward only once, when about 400, in Constantinople, Arcadius had two similarly decorated columns erected to the glory of his father, Theodosius I, and to his own honor, columns now destroyed and known chiefly through drawings of the Renaissance period or later. It would be difficult to find a more flagrant example of imitation: after three centuries, a Christian emperor repeats a type of pagan Imperial monument, and later the copies pass—understandably, by the way—as real Roman works.

One can guess what impression this *renovatio* must have made on contemporaries. For these historical columns and their bases revived a kind of visual presentation of historic events that had not been cultivated since the second century: in superposed registers they depicted historical episodes or symbolic ceremonies, scenes of war and military campaigns, with crowds and hilly landscapes and cities, the whole evoked with a laudatory and triumphal intent. Scenes of this kind, forming entire cycles on the shafts of these spiral monuments, cannot have been usual elsewhere. Doubtless, then, the reliefs of the two columns in Constantinople had an effect on their contemporaries. I even think that a material proof of this effect is to be seen in a great Christian monument of Rome, the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore.

These mosaics were made in the reign of Pope Sixtus III (432–40), soon after 430, a little more than two decades after the Imperial columns of Constantinople, and they are obviously inspired by triumphal art. The mosaics of the arch that stands before the apse, with single scenes distributed in superposed registers, do not represent successive episodes of a continuous story. They are artificially juxtaposed for the purpose of iconographic demonstration. In this respect the mosaics of the arch form a counterpart to the similar compositions on the base of the triumphal column of Arcadius, where the compositions, in superposed registers, also form a thematic iconographic ensemble. On both the arch and the base the theme is supreme power—the supreme power of Christ or of an emperor—expressed according to the iconographic conventions of the Roman monarchy.

The mosaics of the nave, on the other hand, have a narrative character. The plan of the architectural decoration obliged the mosaicists to divide their work into a series of individual panels, but the composition of many of them is awkward, giving the impression that a continuous band of images has been cut into distinct parts. If something like this really happened, the relation of these mosaics to the

reliefs in spiral bands on the shafts of the Imperial columns of Constantinople—and also to their models in Rome—becomes still more striking. The surprising thing about these mosaics with Biblical subjects is that the stories of Abraham and Moses are interpreted in terms of the military art of the Romans (see pp. 48 f.). And the mosaicists also use the conventions of the reliefs to represent space: the single plane which rises very high, and two superposed and independent planes. In addition, in the mosaics there are scenes from a palace cycle, which are fitting on the triumphal reliefs but which are unexpected when it is a matter of, for instance, the life of Moses.

Iconographic examination of the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore thus invites us to recognize in them inspiration by the most recent and most impressive Imperial monuments. These mosaics are probably the most extensive and most suggestive example of the iconographic influence of Imperial art; and they enable us to grasp the extent of what Christian art could be expected to take from this source and to recognize that, on the plane of ideas, the contribution was quite limited. Of course, some interesting religious intentions found expression in various unfamiliar figurations in the mosaics of the triumphal arch. But we can mention them only in passing, since the interpretation of these figurations is uncertain. It is important, however, to bring up this difficulty of interpretation of the mosaics of the triumphal arch because the difficulty is characteristic of any exceptional imagery, the exceptional character of the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore being the consequence of their dependence on another art. The triumphal art of the emperors was not intended to convey the Christian ideas with which Christians attempted to charge it, and their efforts in that direction probably gave rise to obscure figurations (for example, the identity of the female figure at the right of the infant Christ in the Adoration of the Magi). Sometimes the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore is called—wrongly—the “Ephesian arch,” a name which is meant to indicate that this mosaic, which, chronologically, follows immediately the third ecumenical council (which sat at Ephesus in 431), reflects its canons relative to the Virgin. If the intention to make an iconographic demonstration of a dogma were clearly evident (but this is far from being so), the mosaics would furnish a proof that imagery inspired by Imperial art was incapable of expressing the theological ideas discussed in this council.

Christian images of triumphal inspiration, on the other hand, always succeed in expressing the idea of the power of God: since Imperial iconography furnished a range of subjects and motifs evoking the idea of power, adaptation of each of these conventional subjects to the Christian frame, to make them play the desired role, that is, to proclaim the power of God, was relatively easy. Some of the motifs of this official symbolism which the mosaicists of S. Maria Maggiore employed on the arch are these: composition in superposed registers, where the highest is filled with

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abstract signs of supreme power, the next shows the Emperor and his dignitaries, and the lower register (or registers) represents the foreigners who recognize the power of the Roman monarch, either by acclamation or by offerings, while at the very bottom of the panel the enemies of the state are portrayed as chained prisoners. The great mosaic of the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore is a counterpart to a composition of this kind: the throne above (top, center) is the symbol of the power of God in heaven; in the same register is shown the recognition of the royalty of Christ by his people (the Hebrews and the Romans); in the second register the foreign kings do homage or present their offerings to the infant Christ; and, still lower, one sees the image of the hostility and defeat of the enemy king, Herod.

The transition from the Imperial triumphal model to the Christian replica is evident, and this enables us, here and in similar cases, to grasp the lesson of such works for our studies. The nature of this lesson can be defined unequivocally: from the Christian point of view these beautiful images on the church's triumphal arch could show to all beholders the great power of God or of Christ—power which extends from heaven to earth, and on earth embraces the Empire and the barbarian countries, that is to say, the entire inhabited universe. This is what the Christian image-makers could achieve by their method of integrating Christian images of a historical nature—that is, from the Scriptures—and a few symbols of abstractions into a well-developed iconographic language familiar to all. Naturally, this iconographic language was also able to inspire more properly Christian creations, more ambitious from the point of view of ideas. But this is another topic to which we will return. For the moment, what interests us is the fact itself of this recourse to the official art of the Empire and its importance for the process of formation of Christian iconography.

Only one iconographic repertory is usually mentioned in connection with the art of the Roman state, the strictly Imperial repertory which furnished the framework for the iconography of the various images of the power of Christ. In bringing the reliefs of the historical triumphal columns into this discussion, we have begun by pointing out figurations of power and their significance for the Christian iconography of the supreme power of God. But the lesson of these same reliefs is not confined to this strictly Imperial aspect of the matter.

The frieze sculptures of military scenes also had their influence on Christian art: and we can observe in the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore the Biblical scenes conceived after the pattern of the military scenes of the Roman columns. This category of images includes not only scenes of combat but representations of armies on the march, sieges of fortified cities, and peaceful contacts with foreigners. In the mosaics the armies and people advance and pass in compact crowds, as in the reliefs of the historical columns; and one is hard put to it to remember that these hosts

represent sometimes the Egyptians and sometimes the Hebrews—in fact, what one seems to see everywhere in the mosaics are Roman legions in battle with barbarians. Fortified Roman towns are frequent both in the mosaics and in the column reliefs. In other scenes in the mosaics, the chief men of Israel, Moses, Joshua, etc., are placed on hillocks, thus dominating the mass of the people of Israel. In the reliefs of Roman military campaigns, the same device serves to point out the emperor, the general, the centurion, or some other Roman officer. He often mounts a knoll or a podium to harangue the soldiers; and Joshua does the same when he stills the sun in a mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore. To the series of scenes representing peaceful contacts with foreigners belongs the S. Maria Maggiore mosaic in which Abraham astride a charger, like a Roman general, meets the priest-king Melchizedek, on foot, bringing Abraham bread and wine. Other mosaics show a leader of Israel seated, receiving the delegates of a neighboring tribe, just as a Roman official receives the representatives of a conquered people in the military reliefs. In these, in addition, appear winds, personifications of places or rivers, or celestial messengers (Victories) that intervene in the affairs of men—devices also found in the S. Maria Maggiore mosaics.

What military imagery offered to the Christian image-makers was often not usable in the customary program of ancient Christian art. It is principally in illustrated manuscripts of the historical books of the Old Testament that we see its imprint, when the illustrations are composed at a very early date, that is in the fifth century. To judge from medieval copies, Psalter illustrations at this period originated in the same source of inspiration; and this is hardly surprising, in view of the importance of themes of armed battle and acts of violence in the Psalms.

It is necessary to point out in particular one area of Christian iconography that is entirely dependent on models furnished by the art of the Roman state: the iconography of tribunals, judgments, condemnations, and executions. Given that the judicial function is a prerogative of political power, it is the emperor, or a magistrate officiating in his name, who presides over scenes of judgment and who is shown conducting the interrogation of the prisoner, condemning him to corporal or other punishment, while his agents conduct the accused or condemned man, guard the door of his prison, strike him, or cut off his head. On the sarcophagi of Roman magistrates judgment scenes are frequent, and the iconographic formula is the same that was applied to the judgment by Solomon or of Daniel or the trials of Jesus or any Christian martyr. It was a standard formula, already seen in variant versions in the frescoes of a Roman house under the Farnesina (now in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome), where the judgments involve mythological figures.

In the art of judicial themes the scene of execution by beheading is probably of the same period. It is the scenes of this type on the Imperial columns that most directly foreshadow the usual images of execution in Christian hagiographic iconog-

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raphy: they surely come from triumphal imagery, for it is there—in order to glorify the performance of the “peace-making” Roman army—that there was most often occasion for representing executions (since executions decreed by an ordinary tribunal were unlikely to be honored by an image). The Christian borrowing of this model is particularly suggestive because it illustrates a “mutation” in the meaning of a borrowed term, going beyond a more or less marked “shift” in meaning and completely reversing the sense. Whereas the Roman state propagated these images in order to glorify the magistrate and the military, who, by cutting off heads, established Roman order, the Christian image-makers made use of the same iconographic scheme to exalt the memory of those who were executed and to proclaim the iniquity of the representatives of the Roman state. The first examples of these figurations which, inspired by the practices and the art of the government of Rome, served to condemn it appear before the Peace of the Church. Three anonymous martyrs, kneeling, their eyes bound, ready to receive the executioner’s sword stroke, are represented on the wall of a tiny *confessio* under the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo on the Aventine in Rome. Several Roman sarcophagi of the fourth century show St. Peter and St. Paul, separately, in scenes of their judgment (the execution itself is not shown at this period). These first images of the passion of the apostles are summarily treated, and it is possible that the very vagueness of the action reflects the difficulty felt by the Christians in accepting the moral reversal just mentioned.

Since traditional art had shown condemned or executed persons only to point out their crime vis-à-vis Roman society, it took time to make the sacred image a testimony of sympathy for those who there occupied the traditional place of the enemy. This has often been affirmed, in order to explain the absence, then the rarity, of images of the Crucifixion of Christ in late antiquity and the contemptible quality of those which do exist. The hypothesis of moral reversal is not to be rejected, but it is more difficult to demonstrate it on the iconographic level than it is for scenes of execution by beheading. We do not know any figurations of crucifixions of those condemned to death by Roman civil law, whereas the military reliefs on the Imperial columns in Rome furnish, within the frame of Imperial triumphal art, scenes of the beheading of adversaries of the Roman state. For the hagiographic images of decapitation, there are thus the indispensable standards for comparison.

The themes and motifs that we have mentioned are not claimed to be the only ones taken from the art of the Roman state into Christian iconography. Many aspects of this art furnished models on different occasions and by various channels to Christian image-makers after the Peace of the Church. There will be opportunity later for referring briefly to a few of them in discussing Christian portraits; for

certain categories of these portraits adopt formulas used for portraits of dignitaries of the Empire, and others descend from them by way of assimilation or analogy.

Apart from the art of the Roman state (relating to the emperor, magistrates, army, and their respective official activities), there were other more or less circumscribed areas of iconography within the framework of Roman art at the time of the Peace of the Church which furnished Christian artists with useful elements of the iconographic vocabulary they were constructing. For instance, there should be mention of the much more limited but not negligible iconography which had as its principal provenience the villas or rural habitations of the great landed proprietors and which probably reflected their taste and ideas.

The very first Christian iconography, that of the funerary cycles and the paintings of Dura, the fruit perhaps of competition with the art of the synagogue, was thoroughly urban—an art of the city which carries within it the mark of the tastes and anxieties of the urban populace of late ancient times. The Christian iconography inspired by Imperial art depends upon models created by the government of the Roman Empire and used throughout its entire territory and in all social milieus. But, besides the government and the mass of the urban population, there was the powerful senatorial class, the class of the great landowners, particularly powerful in Sicily, North Africa, and Syria, and everywhere where there were latifundia. In a few instances Christians were established in the villas of these extremely wealthy and powerful proprietors, and the art of the landed estates of these aristocratic Romans seems to have contributed more to the repertory of images than has been generally recognized. The pavement mosaics that have been uncovered in a great number of the villas, and the continuation of this art in the vault decoration of the equally aristocratic Umayyad mansions in Syria, as well as several less important series of related monuments, afford us an idea of this art and its iconographic program. It happens that one group of subjects from these Roman villa decorations served as a model for a specific and important category of Christian images, and as we have the good fortune here to be able to observe both the point of origin and the final expression of this branch of iconography, the really Christian part of these figurations can be usefully measured.

At the point of departure is a pavement mosaic from Carthage, which comes from the property of a landowner who is represented and identified as “Dominus Julius.” The panel shows the signorial manor (in the center) and the proprietors, husband and wife (at the bottom). Slaves surround the proprietors of the domain. One slave holds before his master a scroll marked with his name. I take it to be an act of sale or a similar document certifying the rights of Julius over the estate. Around his wife, other slaves remind us of his riches: they carry jewels and viands.

At the top is a feminine personification (at her feet are a hen and her chicks in front of a coop—a symbol, possibly of the home). Two slaves approach, holding the products of the domain, while in the four corners of the panel archaic figures personify the four seasons and their occupations. Finally, on either side of the image of the manorial dwelling which forms the center of the composition, the favorite diversion of the country nobility is depicted in the preparations for the hunt and the return from it.

This mosaic represents a particular estate or domain belonging to a specific proprietor, and it portrays it conventionally by means of several subjects that are independent but grouped in a certain precise fashion: in the middle, the dwelling which is the symbol of the property of Julius; converging toward it, the bearers of the fruit of its cultivation, of which several details are seen; and, accompanying these, in the corners of the panel, the four scenes symbolizing the seasons. In other words, an estate is represented symbolically in its extent and its riches by means of the occupations of its inhabitants and the incessant movement of time. And one should keep in mind, too, the motif of the hen with her chicks, which I take to be a symbol of the home.

Although in North Africa and Europe Christian pavement mosaics are rarely iconographic in subject, in the Greek and Semitic East many of the churches of the fifth and especially the sixth century contain carpet mosaics with allegorical imagery. The same is true for the synagogues of this period in Palestine. It is in the Holy Land, including the Lebanon, that we find the preponderance of examples. Most often there is a decoration on a white ground of entwining vines that enclose human and animal figures. A comparison with later Islamic monuments in the same area points to the probable secular origin of such mosaics; in fact, two frescoes of the eighth century, in two different Umayyad palaces, utilize the essential terms: at Qasr el Heir, the scrolls with living things and, in the center, a personification of the Earth, as well as a hunt and musicians; at Qasr 'Amrah, the foliage sheltering in its turnings busts of persons, animals, musicians, and dancers. (In the second example, the composition is spread over a vault; at the end of antiquity, the themes of pavement decoration, on the one hand, and of ceilings and vaults, on the other, were frequently the same.)

Some of the pavements of the churches show only a more or less random choice of motifs from among those mentioned above. Others are systematic, and it is through them that it is possible to see the chain of relationship that ties them to the mosaic of Lord Julius from Carthage. The center of several of these mosaics (the section which in the Carthage mosaic shows the dwelling of the proprietor of the domain, surmounted by a personification of the home) is occupied by a personification of Earth, as the inscriptions show. Two personages present this figure with

baskets of fruit, bringing us back to another feature of the Carthage mosaic, the bearers of offerings, who extend them toward the "home." Certain Palestinian mosaics also show the motif of the hen and chicks, and where the motif is complete we see that it opposes the security that the mother hen provides for her chicks to the dangers encountered by the cock, the victim of the fox. In the same mosaics one also sees the images of work in the fields or gardens; and although I do not know any that are grouped according to the seasons, there are personifications of the seasons and of the months on other contemporary Palestinian pavements, showing that these pavements are all more or less related. The hunt, which the Carthage mosaic also shows, is sometimes added to the motif of work in the fields. But in the Christian versions of such pavements in Palestine, the hunt takes on a peculiar character: instead of killing the game, the hunters seem to content themselves with pushing back the animals. The intention, seemingly, was to show man's defense against the wild beast, an idea which can be associated with figurations of tamed animals in the same ensembles: animals trained to the sound of the flute, and saddled pack animals. The subject of these church pavements thus becomes the earth and the occupations of men who cultivate it and who defend it against savage beasts. From the conventional image of a certain part of the earth (that of a real and private domain), we pass to the image, not less conventional but modified, of the earth in general, the earth where God reigns and which is the domain over which the activity of the Church extends.

In order to formulate this idea iconographically, the eastern Christians used a model of the type of the Carthage pavement, modifying it in several respects—for instance, by replacing the juxtaposition of numerous small scenes (as in the pavements of the Great Palace at Istanbul) by a network of vine scrolls. The tracery of vines serves as a frame for figurations which are independent of each other but which, as they are superposed in almost regular rows, the spectator is invited to consider independently of the *rincaux* as a single picture with several registers. This is the way, of course, that one considers the mosaic of Lord Julius, where, however, the scenes are brought together without the framing of the vine scrolls.

Comparison of the Carthage mosaic with those of Madeba and Mt. Nebo (also known as Mt. Pisgah) shows how the secular symbolic image of a specific landed property becomes in the hands of the Christians the image of the earth in general and in particular the ideal land governed by God. The possibilities of this allegorical imagery for the interpretation of Christian truths were far more limited still than the means offered by Imperial art. But the art of the villas of the great provincial proprietors contributed, it seems, to the expression of the theme of the earth peaceful and calm under God. This theme had a certain success at the end of

antiquity, and perhaps especially in Palestine and the eastern provinces of the Empire, where it met that of the expected Messianic Peace, a Jewish theme based on Old Testament prophecies. The motif of animals expelled as hostile to man after the original sin but assured of return, domesticated, at the time of the Peace is a part of this theme.

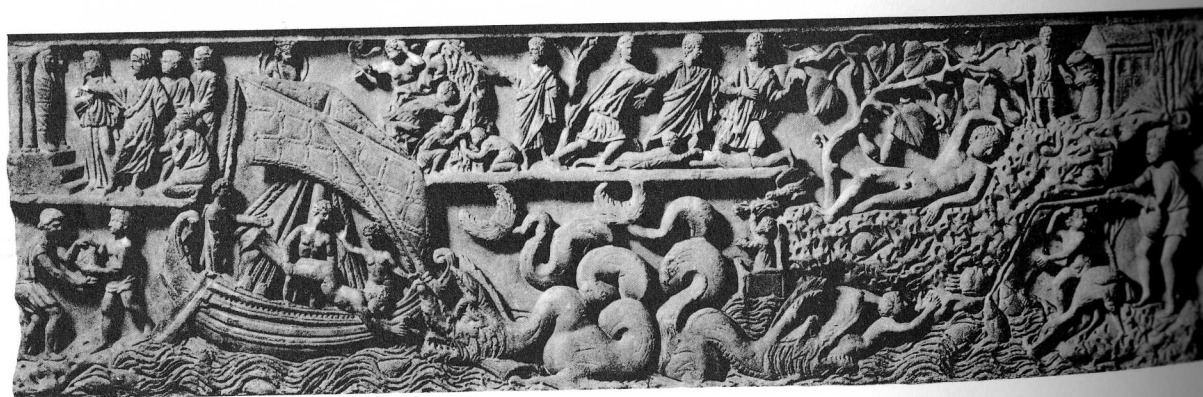
The question of narrative figurations does not concern us here. The difficulty in evaluating the Christian element in these allegorical mosaics is not in determining what parts of the images matter religiously but in defining the precise meanings of the allegories. As we know, at the end of the seventh century (Council of 695), the Byzantine Greeks renounced allegory in their Christian images, and precisely because of this: the shadow of truth, as they said (referring to allegories and to events of the Old Testament), is never as useful as the truth itself, that is to say, the events following the Incarnation. After a brief appearance in the sixth century among the Christians of the East, the allegorical iconography that we have been considering was discredited by this opinion, and it was abandoned a short time after the Islamic invasion of the eastern provinces of the Christian Empire in the seventh century.



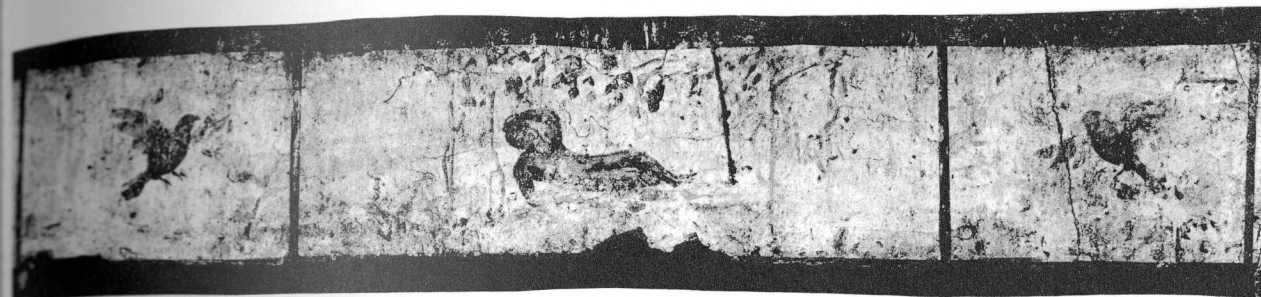
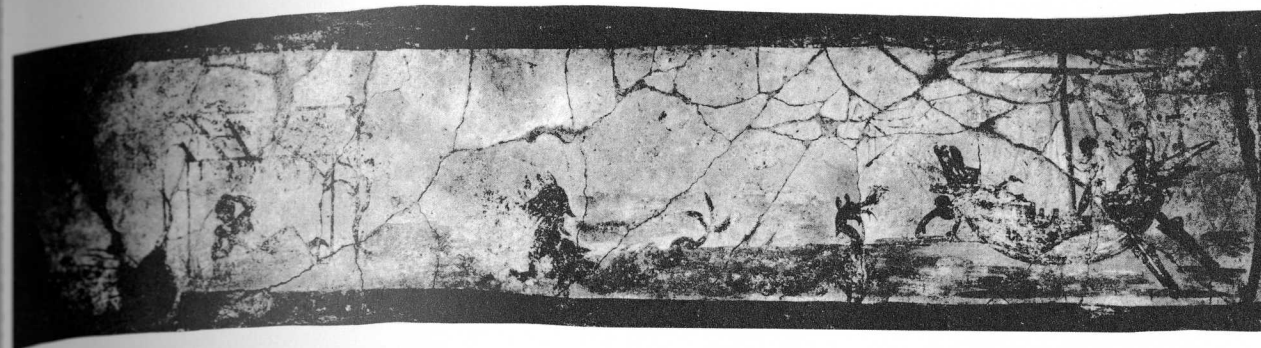
1 Ceiling painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome. Center: Daniel in the lions' den [7, 8, 10]



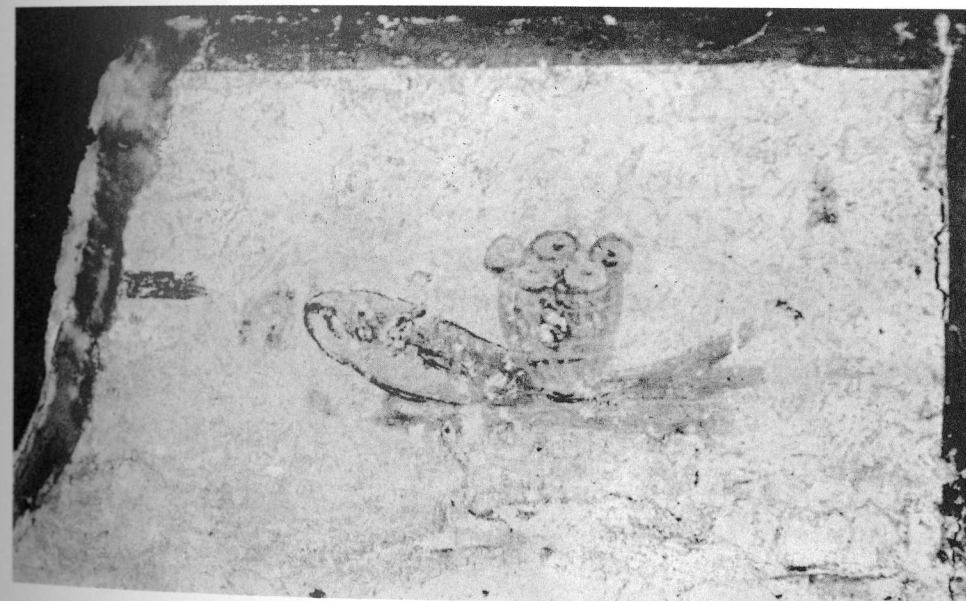
2 Ceiling painting, catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome. Center: The Good Shepherd. Four quarters: The story of Jonah [7, 8, 10]



3 The story of Jonah. Sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome [8]



4 The story of Jonah. Wall paintings, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome [7, 8, 32]



5 Fish supporting basket. Detail from wall painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome [8]



6 Communal repast (Multiplication of the Loaves). Wall painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome [8, 9]



7 Communal repast (The Last Supper). Wall painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome [8]



8 Communal repast. Wall painting, catacomb of Priscilla, Rome [8]



9 Communal repast (The Miracle of Cana). Wall painting, catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome [8]



10 Unidentified scene. Wall painting, hypogeum of the Aurelii, Rome [9]



11 Unidentified scene. Ceiling painting, catacombs of the basilica of S. Sebastiano, Rome [9]



12 Unidentified scene. Wall painting, catacomb of Priscilla, Rome [9]



13 Unidentified figures. Wall paintings (above) in the tympanum and (below) on the surrounding arch, catacombs of the Cimitero Maggiore, Rome [9]



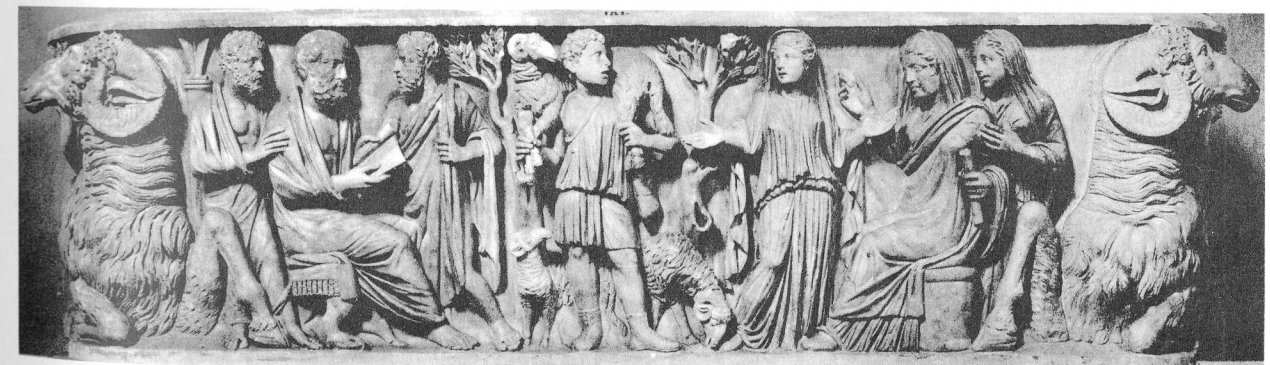
14 Aristotle (?) and his disciples. Wall painting, catacombs under the Via Latina, Rome [9]



15 Orant. Wall painting, catacomb of Domitilla, Rome [10]



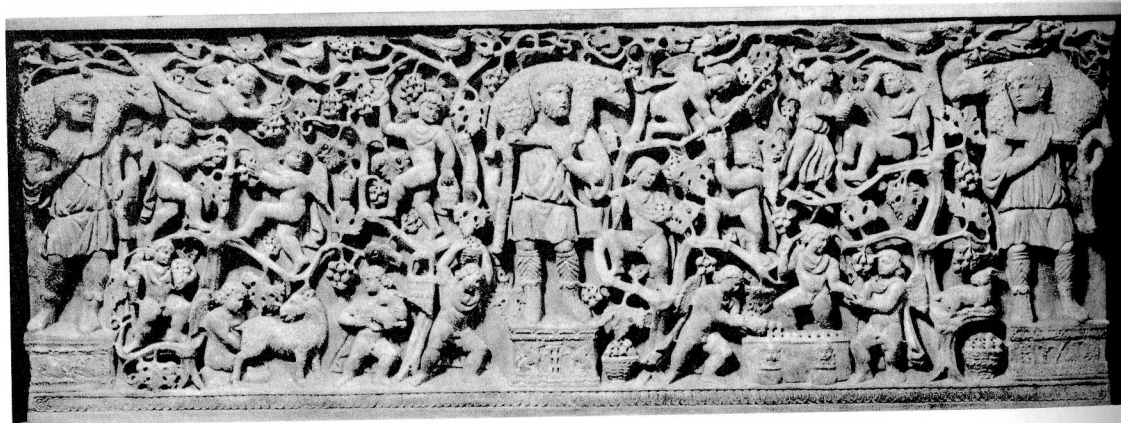
16 Orant. Wall painting, catacomb of Vigna Massimo, Rome [10]



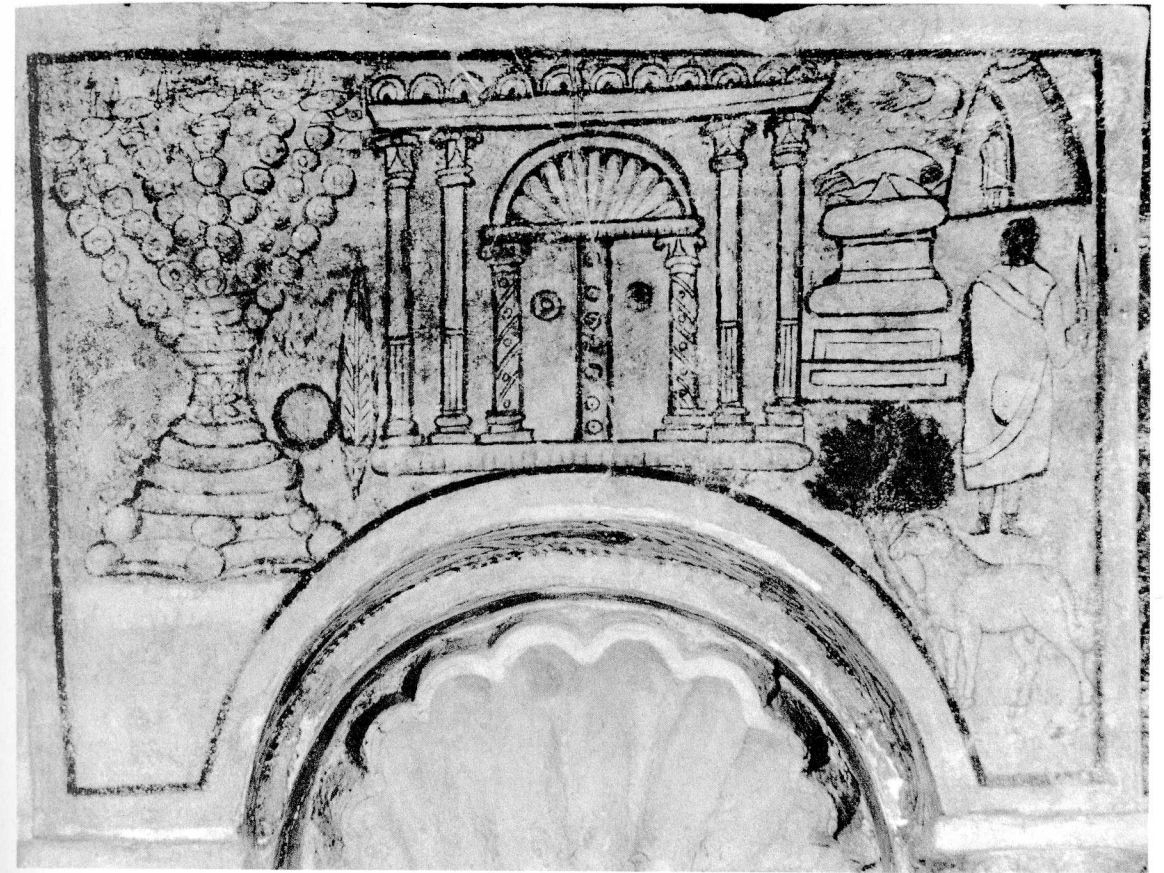
17 Sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome. Center: Shepherd carrying the lamb [10]



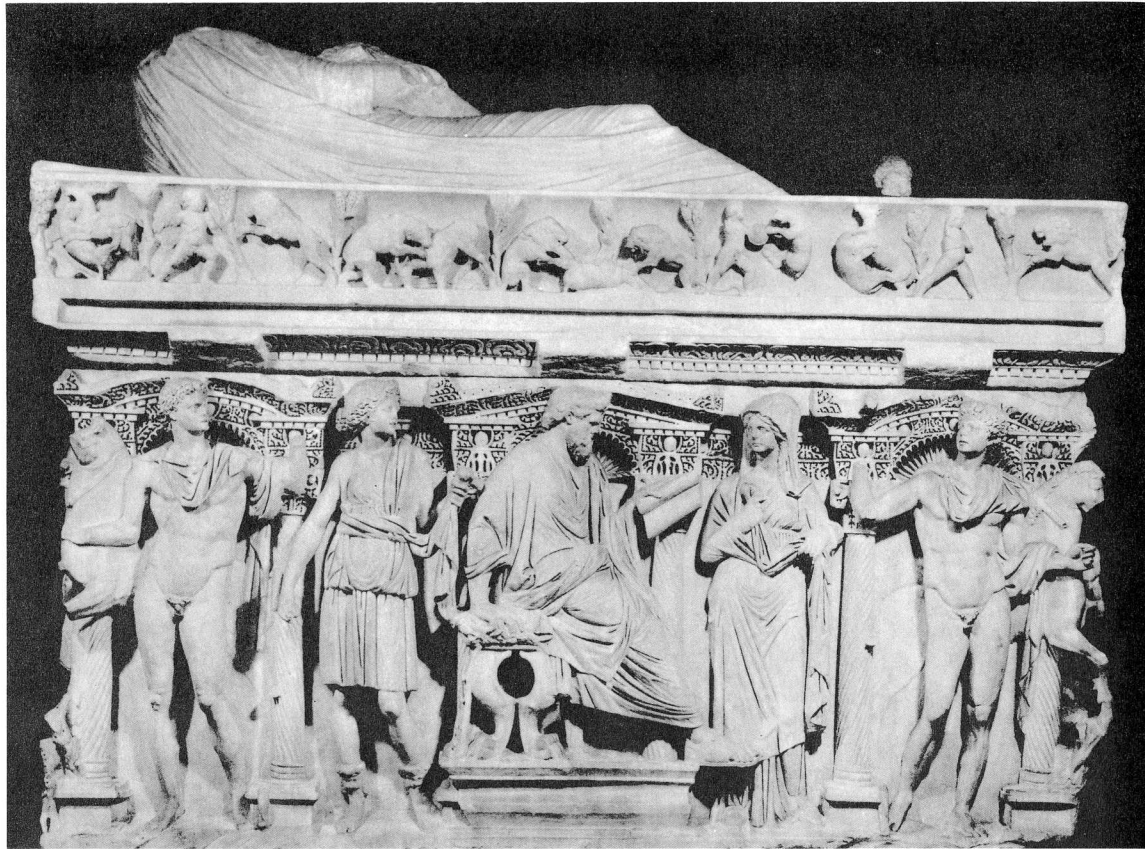
18 Scene of baptism. Wall painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome [10]



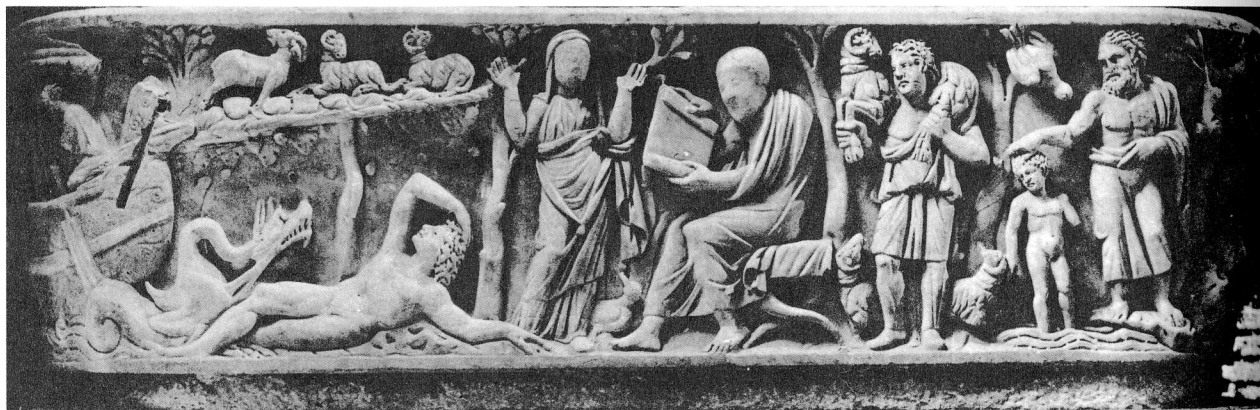
19 Three Good Shepherds. Sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome [10, 11]



20 Upper panel of the Torah shrine, Dura synagogue. National Museum of Damascus.
Right: The sacrifice of Isaac [11]



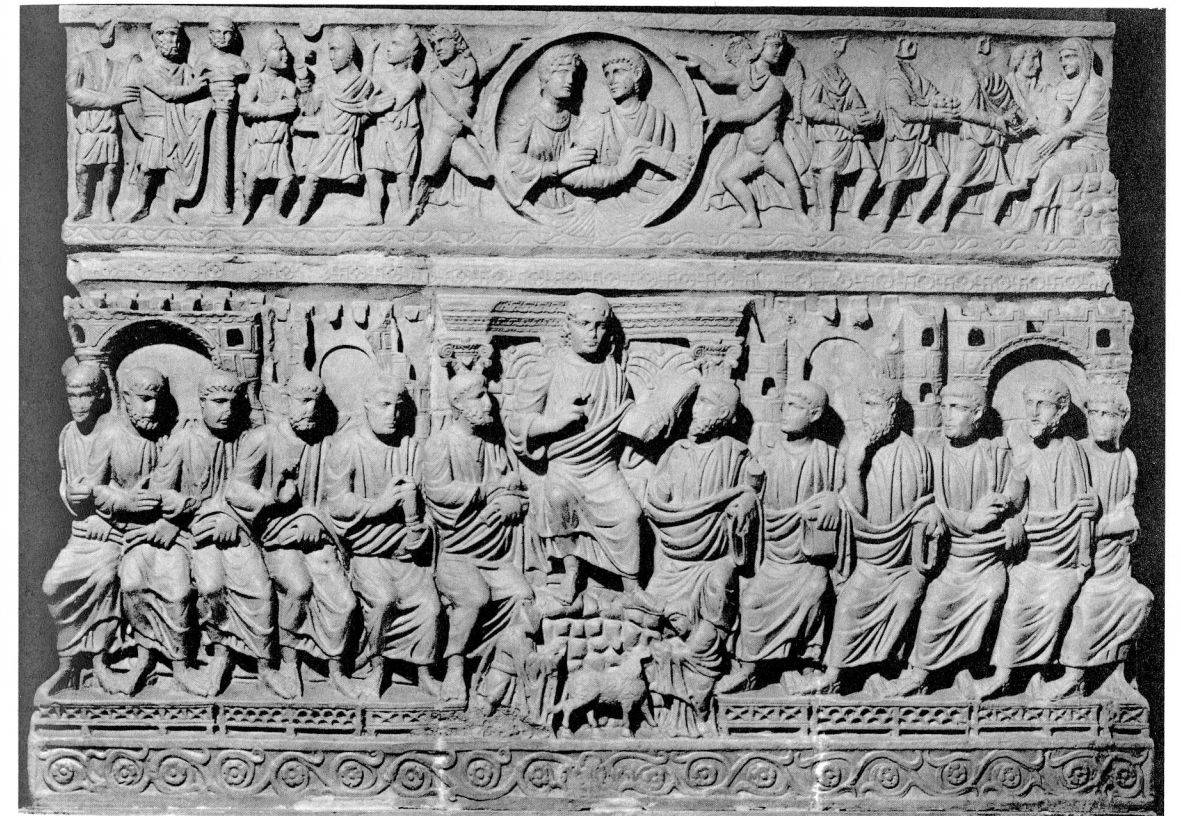
21 Pagan sarcophagus from Sidamara, Anatolia. Archaeological Museums, Istanbul.
Seated figure: A philosopher [32]



22 Sarcophagus, Forum, Rome. Center (seated figure): The true philosopher. Left: Jonah.
Right: The Good Shepherd [10, 12, 32]



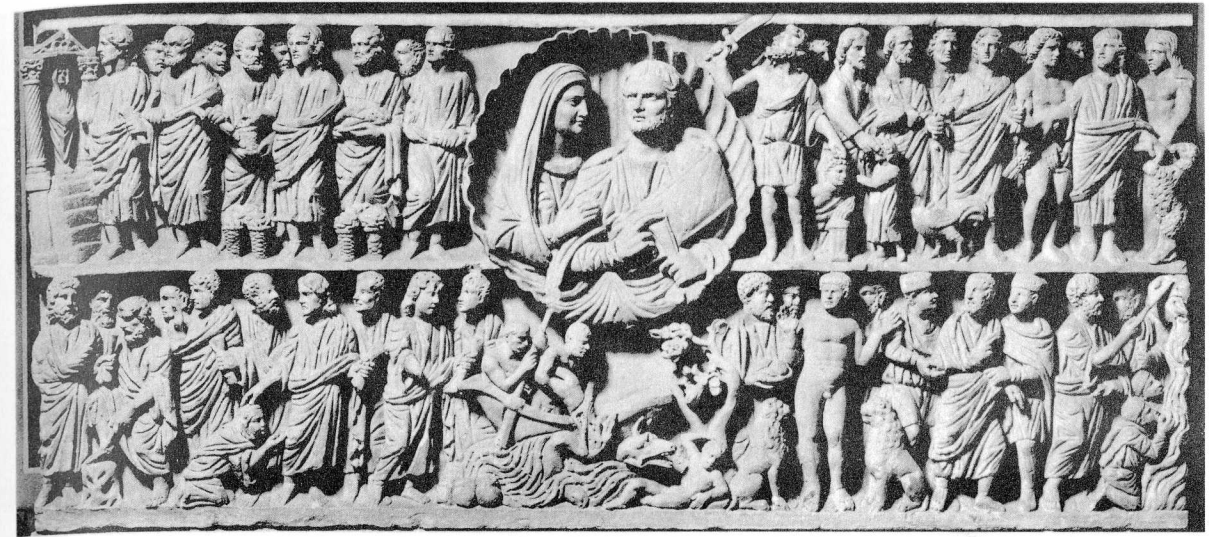
23 Job. Wall painting, catacombs of St. Calixtus, Rome [12, 32]



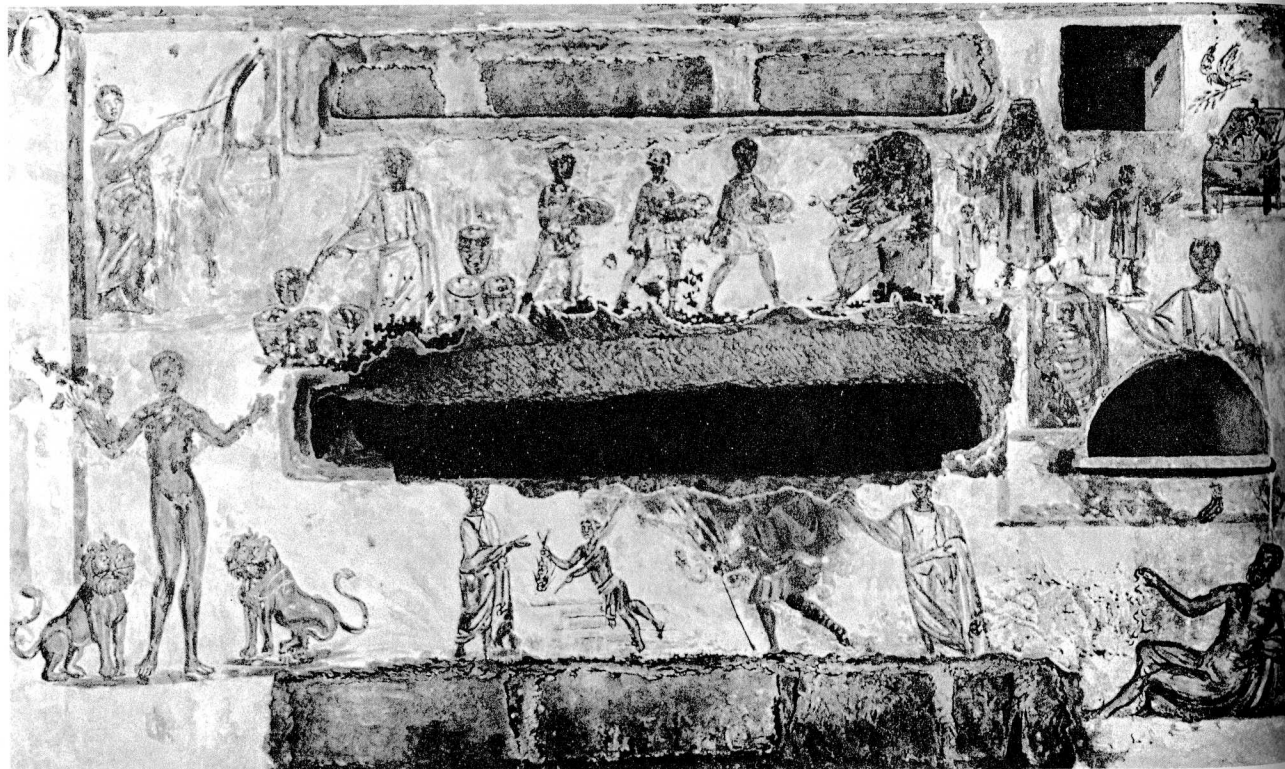
24 Sarcophagus, S. Ambrogio, Milan. Bottom center: The deceased stooping before the true philosopher [12, 32]



25 The resurrection of Lazarus. Wall painting, catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome [12]



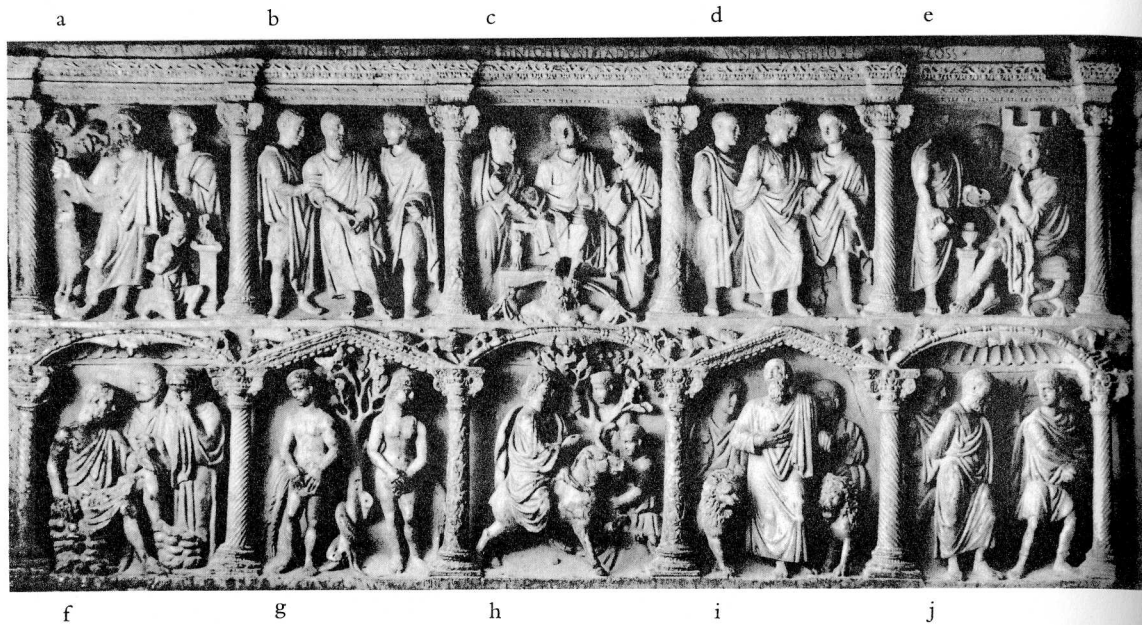
27 Sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome. Extreme left: The resurrection of Lazarus [12]



26 Wall painting, catacomb of Vigna Massimo, Rome. Center, top: The Adoration of the Magi [12]

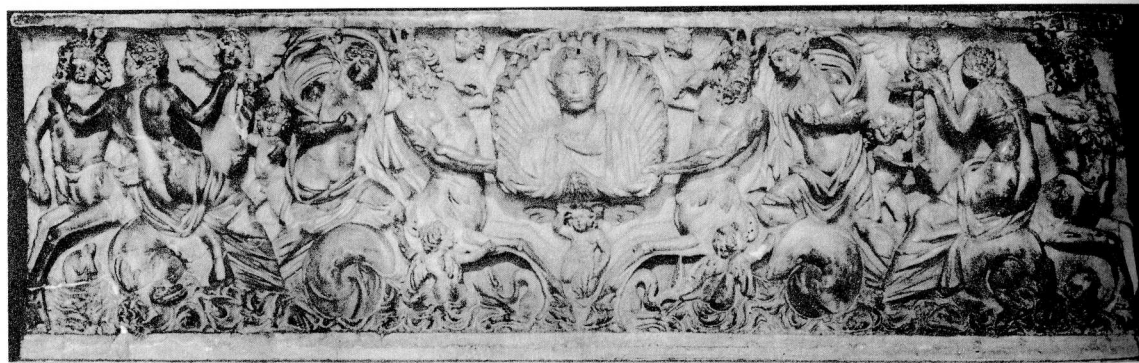


28 Wall painting, catacombs under the Via Latina, Rome. Left: Adam and Eve [12]

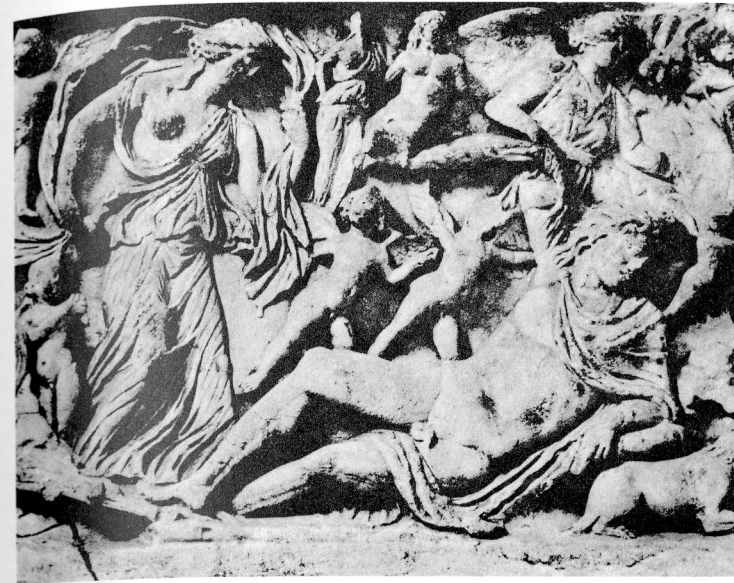


29 Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Vatican Grottoes [13]

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------------|
| a | The sacrifice of Isaac | f | Job |
| b | The judgment of Peter | g | Adam and Eve |
| c | Christ as judge between Peter and Paul | h | The entry into Jerusalem |
| d | Christ before Pilate | i | Daniel in the lions' den |
| e | Pilate washing his hands | j | The judgment of Paul |



30 The deceased transported to the happy isles. Sarcophagus, Louvre, Paris [14]



31 Death of Endymion. Detail from pagan sarcophagus, Museo Nazionale, Naples [14, 32]



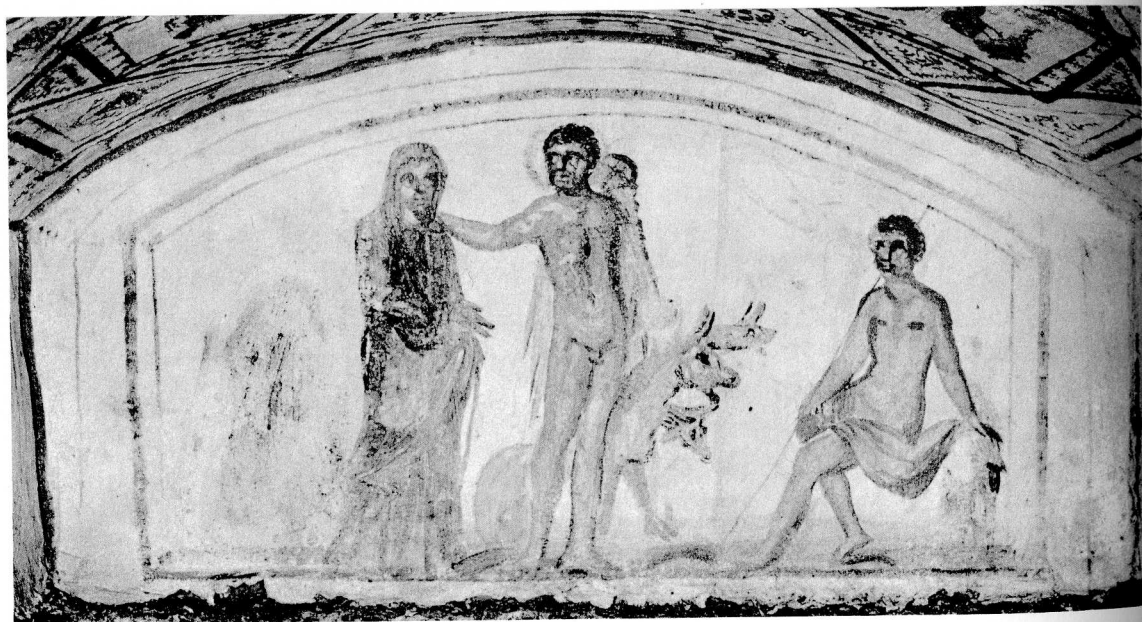
32 Deceased led to Paradise by a saint. Wall painting, catacomb of Domitilla, Rome [15]



33 Wall painting, hypogeum of Vibia, Rome. Left: Deceased led to Paradise [15]



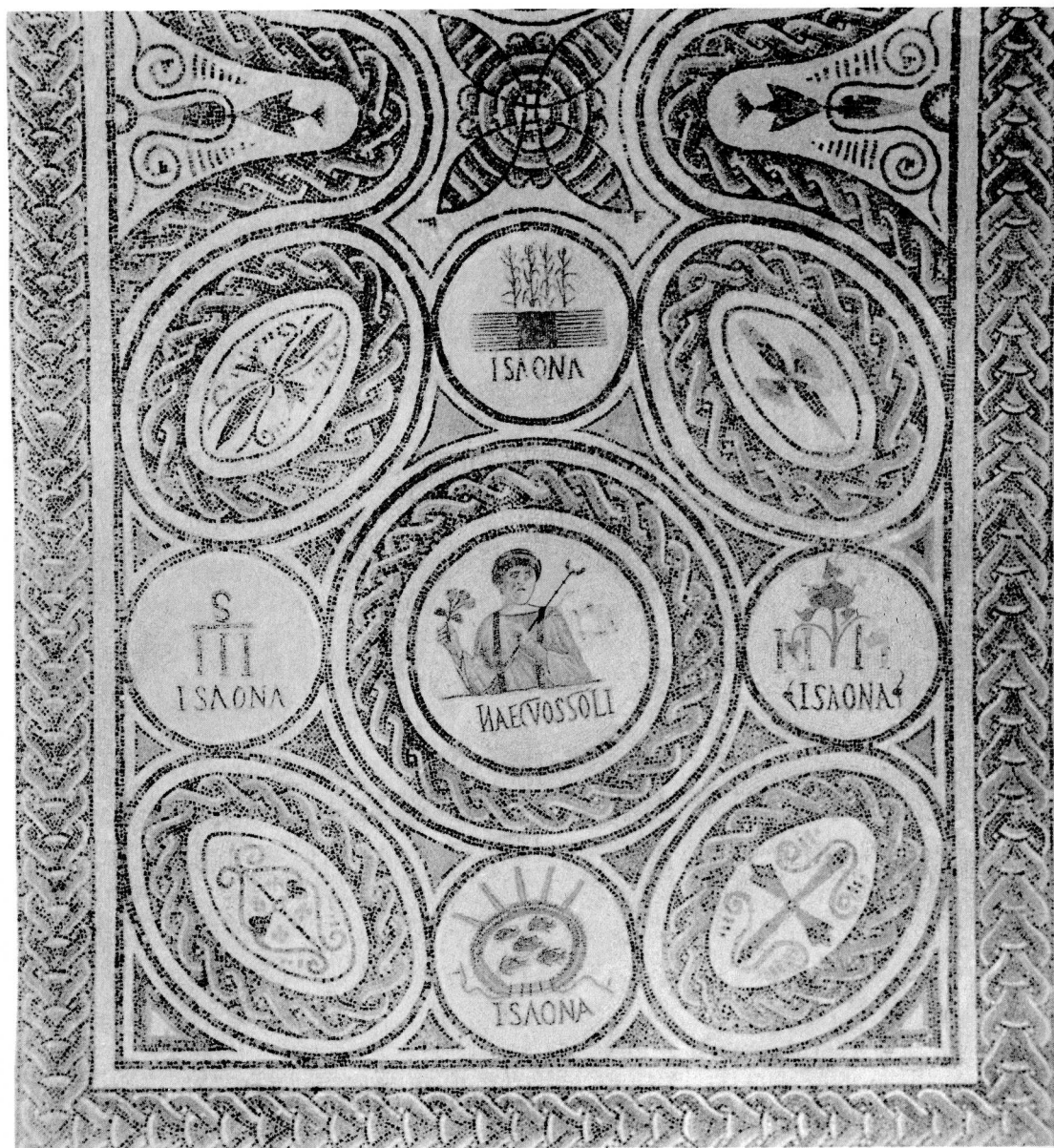
34 Hercules slaying the hydra. Wall painting, catacombs under the Via Latina, Rome [15]



35 Alcestis conducted by Hercules to her husband, Admetus, in the afterlife. Wall painting, catacombs under the Via Latina, Rome [15]



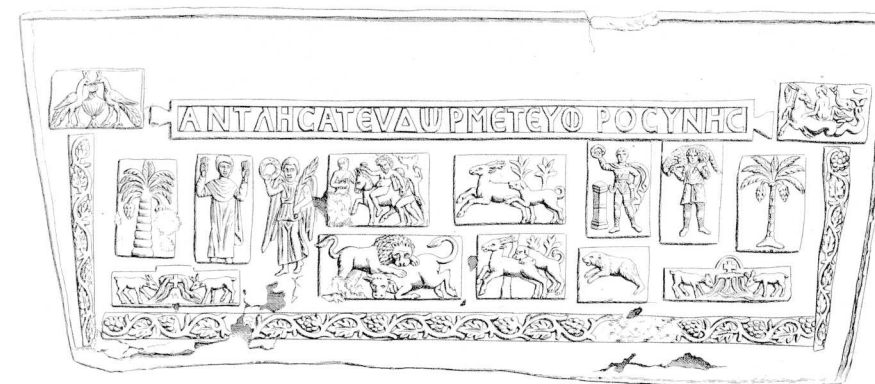
36 Banquet of five circus fighters. Pavement mosaic from El Djem. Musée du Bardo, Tunis [16]



37 Gladiator surrounded by acclamatory inscriptions. Pavement mosaic from El Djem. Musée du Bardo, Tunis [16]



38 Personification of Ananeosis. Pavement mosaic from Antioch [17]



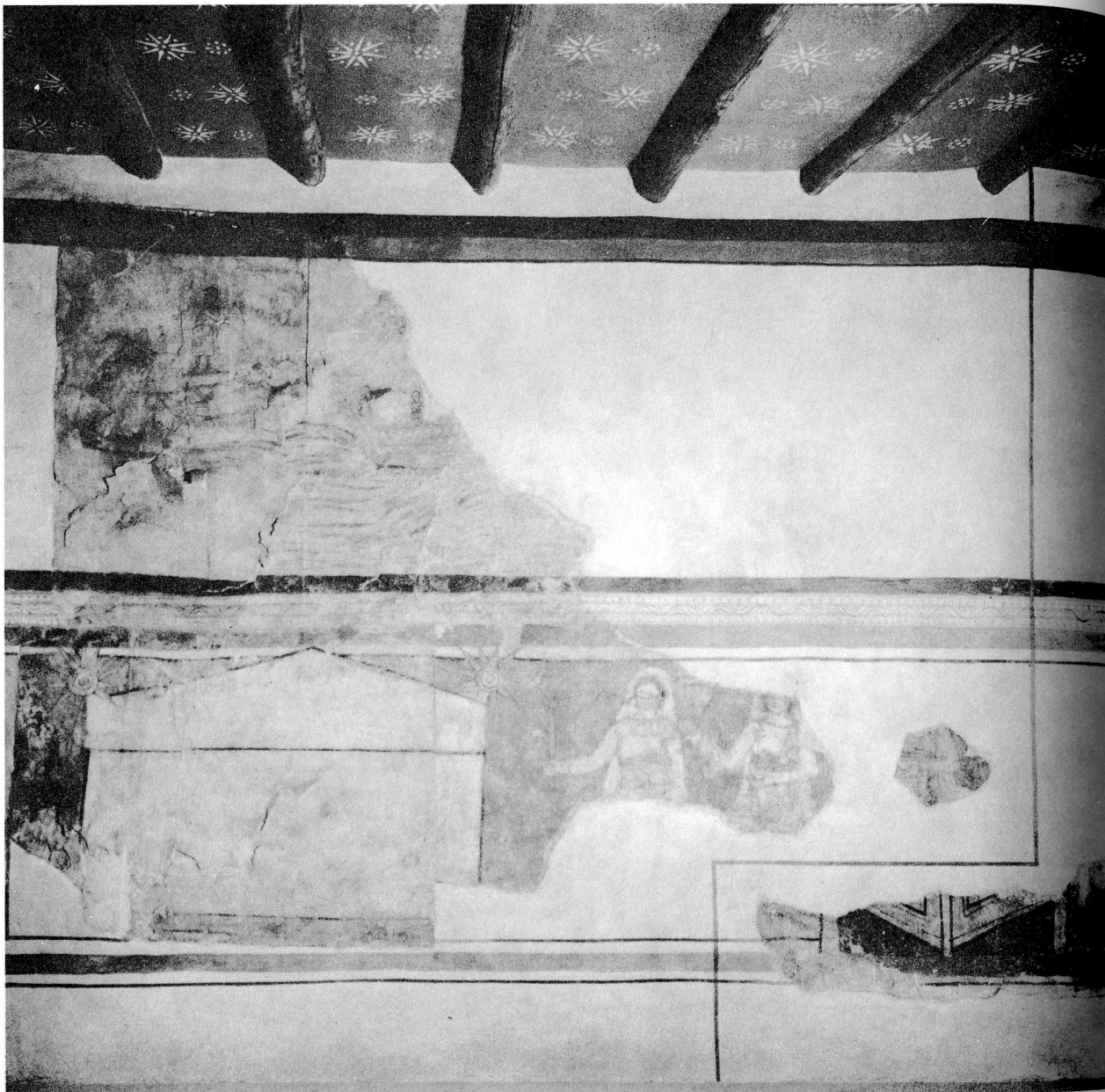
39 Decoration, with mingled Christian motifs and those of the arena, on a Paleo-Christian lead vessel found in Tunisia (now lost; drawing) [18]



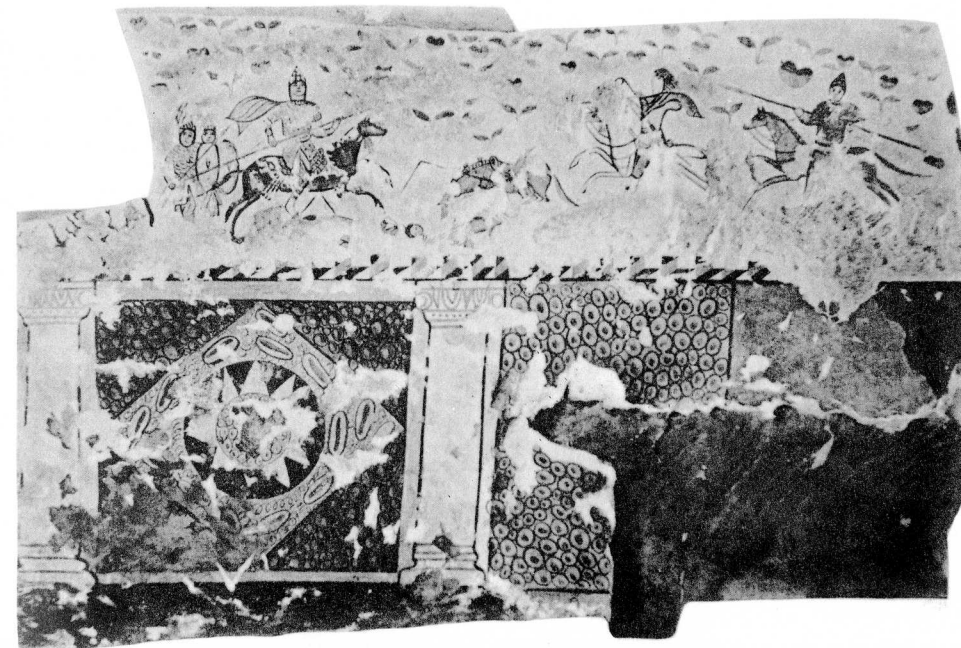
42 The Samaritan woman at the well. Wall painting, Christian baptistery , Dura. Yale University Art Gallery [19, 20]



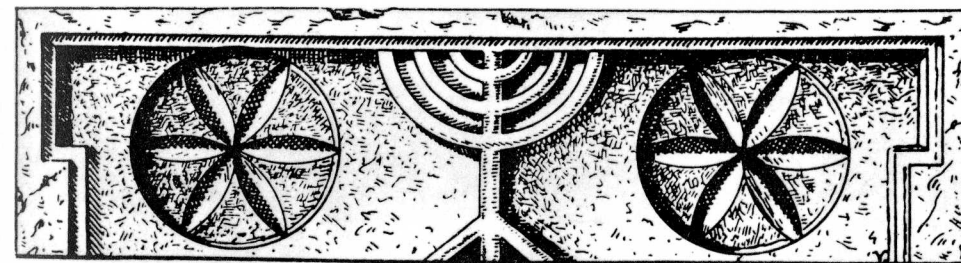
43 Wall painting, Christian baptistery, Dura. Yale University Art Gallery. Left: The healing of the paralytic. Right: Christ walking on the water [19, 20]



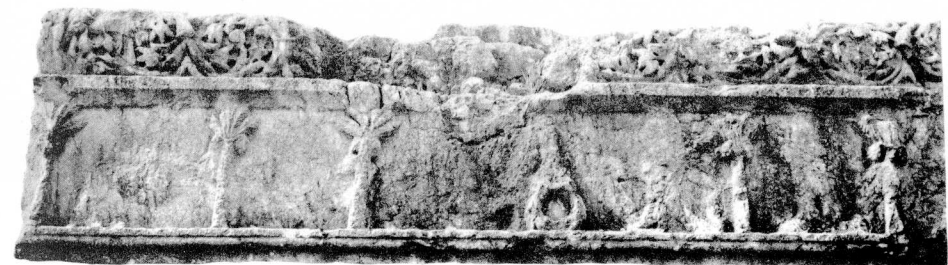
44 Wall painting, Christian baptistery, Dura. Yale University Art Gallery. Right: The Holy Women at the tomb of Christ [19, 20]



45 Wall painting, pagan hypogeum, Kerch, Crimea (water-color copy) [21]



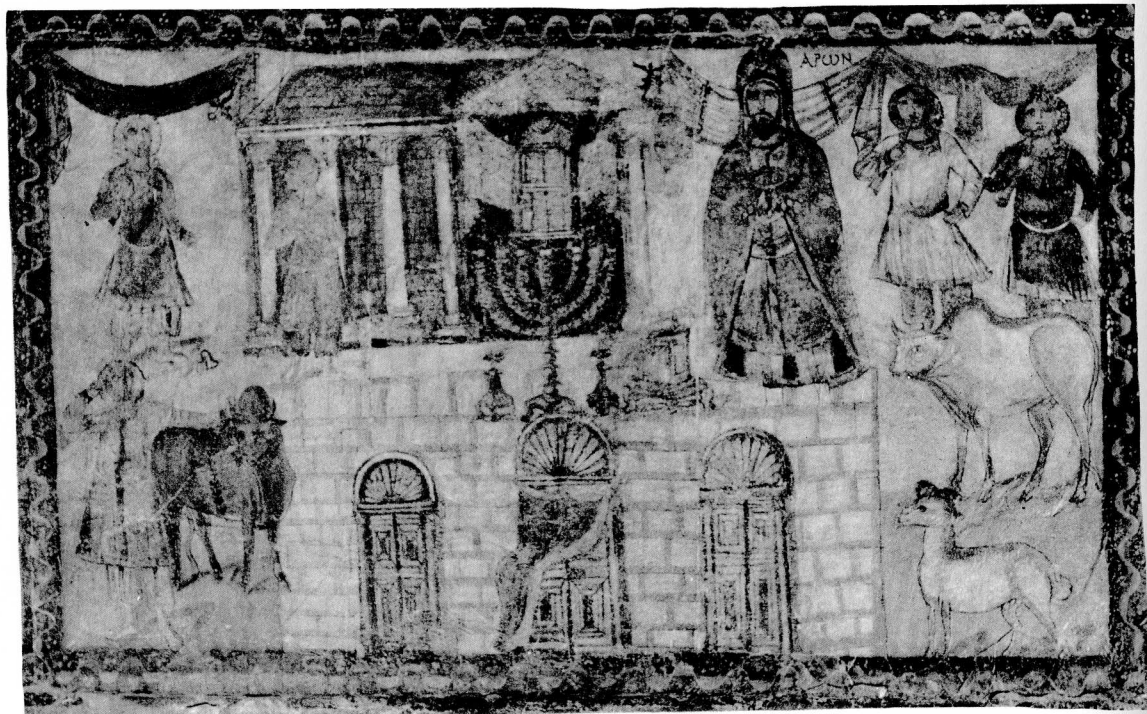
46 Seven-branched candlestick flanked by stars. Lintel relief from a synagogue at Jaffa (drawing) [24]



47 Palms of paradise and creatures. Lintel relief from a synagogue at Capernaum [24]



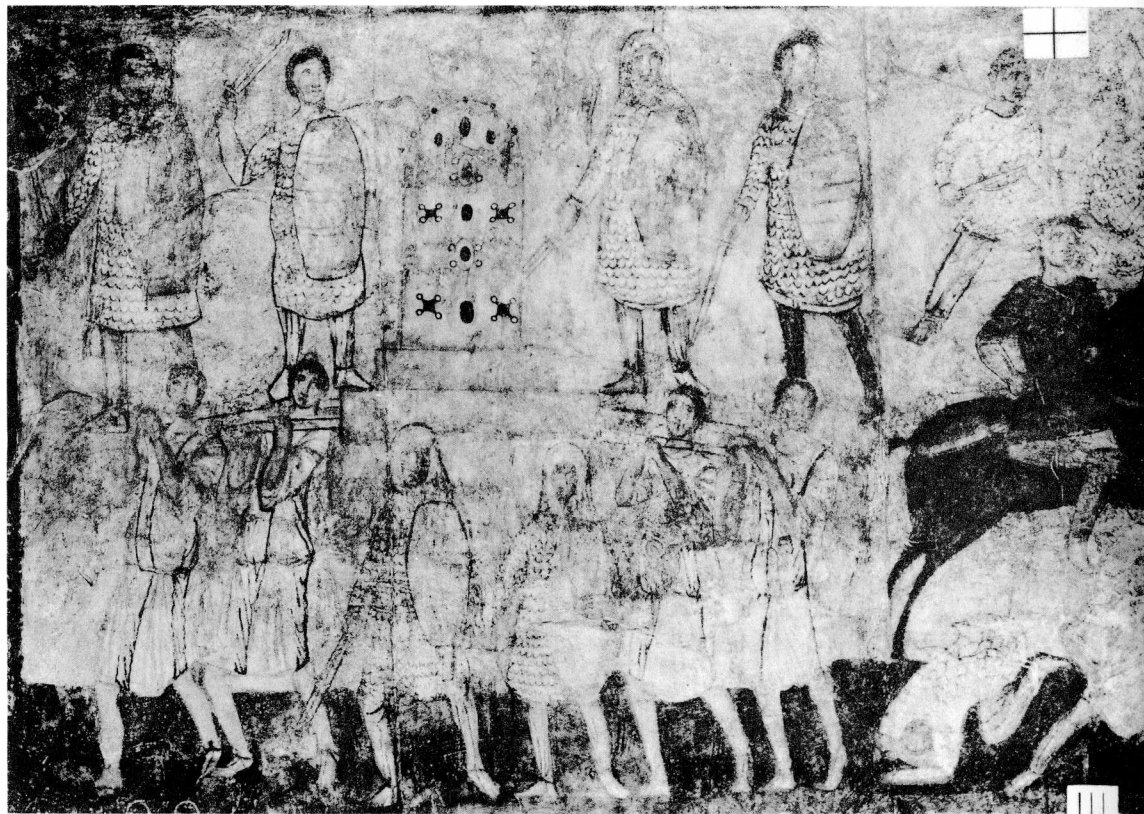
48 Noah and his wife beside the Ark. Bronze coin from Apamea, Phrygia. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [24]



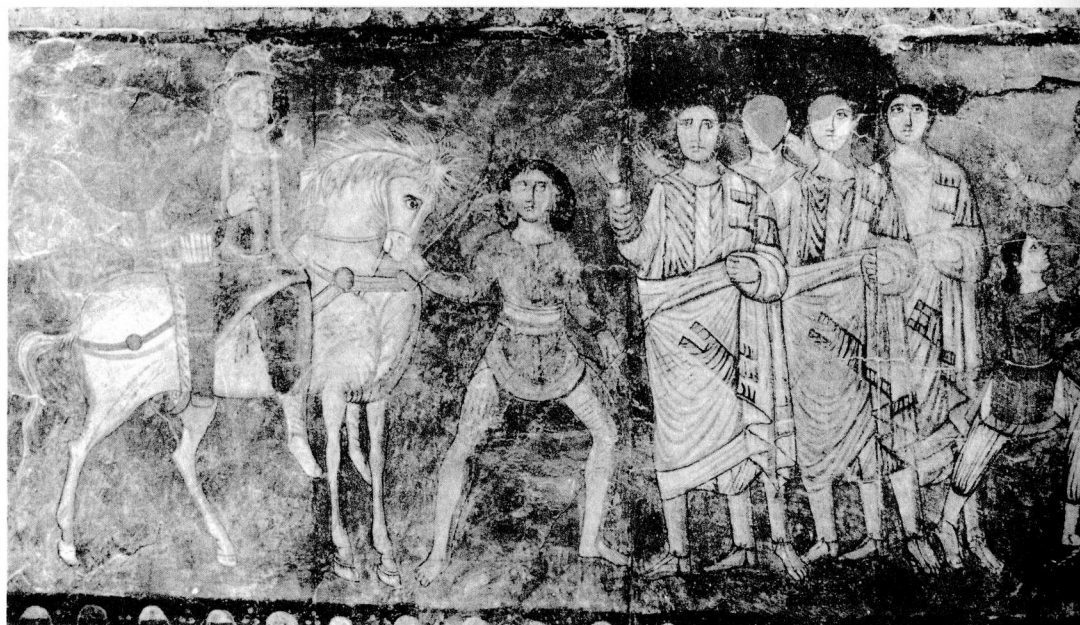
49 The Temple where the Ark came to rest. Wall painting, Dura synagogue. National Museum, Damascus [26]



50 The wall above the apse, Dura synagogue. National Museum, Damascus (copy by H. Gute, Yale University Art Gallery).
Top: David as the ideal king of Israel. Bottom: The lion of Judah and Jacob's two benedictions [26]



51 The return to Jerusalem of the Ark of the Covenant. Wall painting, Dura synagogue. National Museum, Damascus [26]



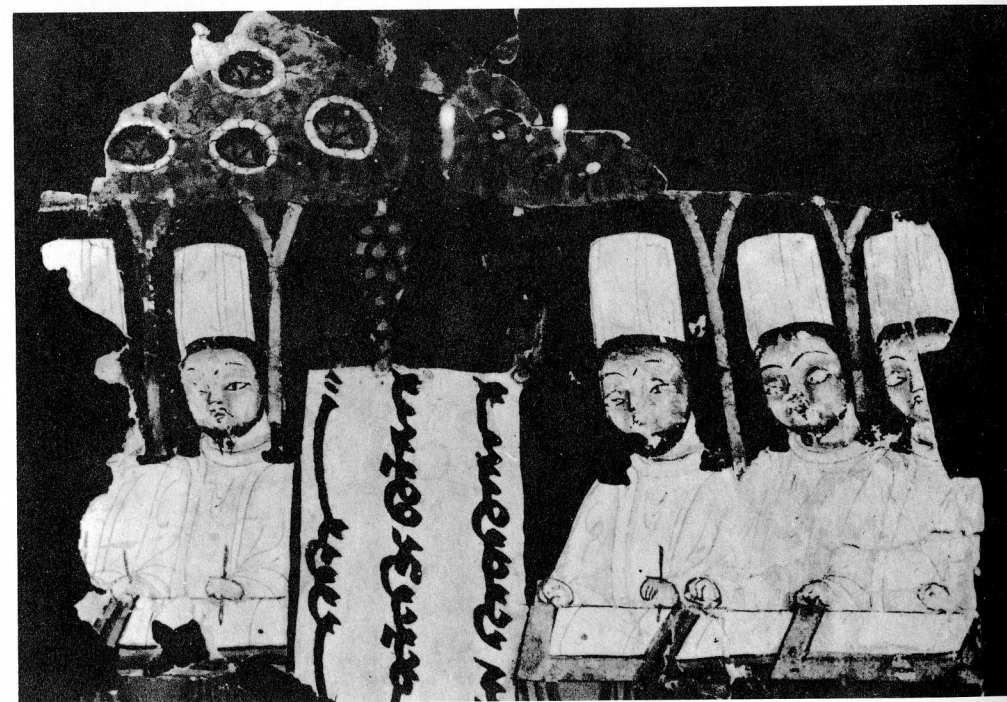
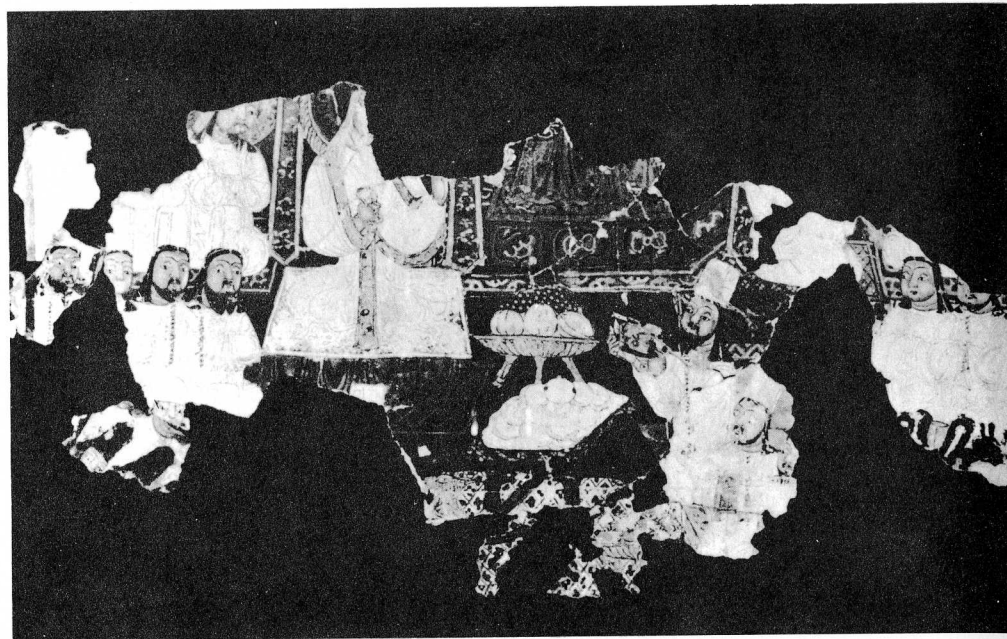
52 Mordecai's triumph. Wall painting, Dura synagogue. National Museum, Damascus [26]



53 The resurrection of the dead before Ezekiel. Wall painting, Dura synagogue. National Museum, Damascus [26]



54 David anointed by Samuel. Wall painting, Dura synagogue. National Museum, Damascus [26]



55 Manichean miniatures. Above: A liturgical celebration of a feast.
Below: Scribes and ornaments. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin [28]



56 A row of standing figures. Wall painting, hypogeum of the Aurelii, Rome [32]



57 Apostle (?) with his arm raised. Wall painting, hypogeum of the Aurelii, Rome (water-color copy) [32]



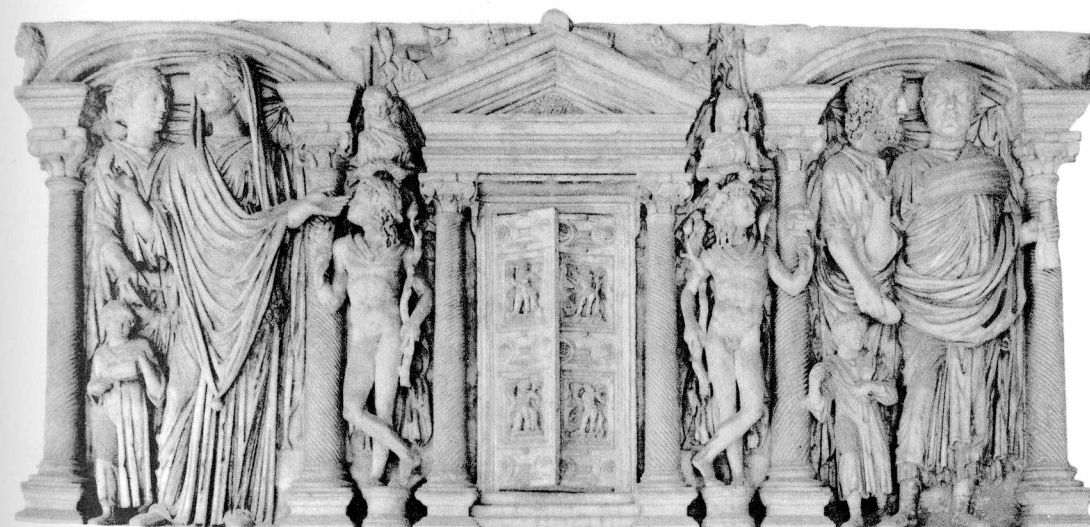
58 Roman sarcophagus, Capitoline Museum, Rome. On lid: A dead child [32]



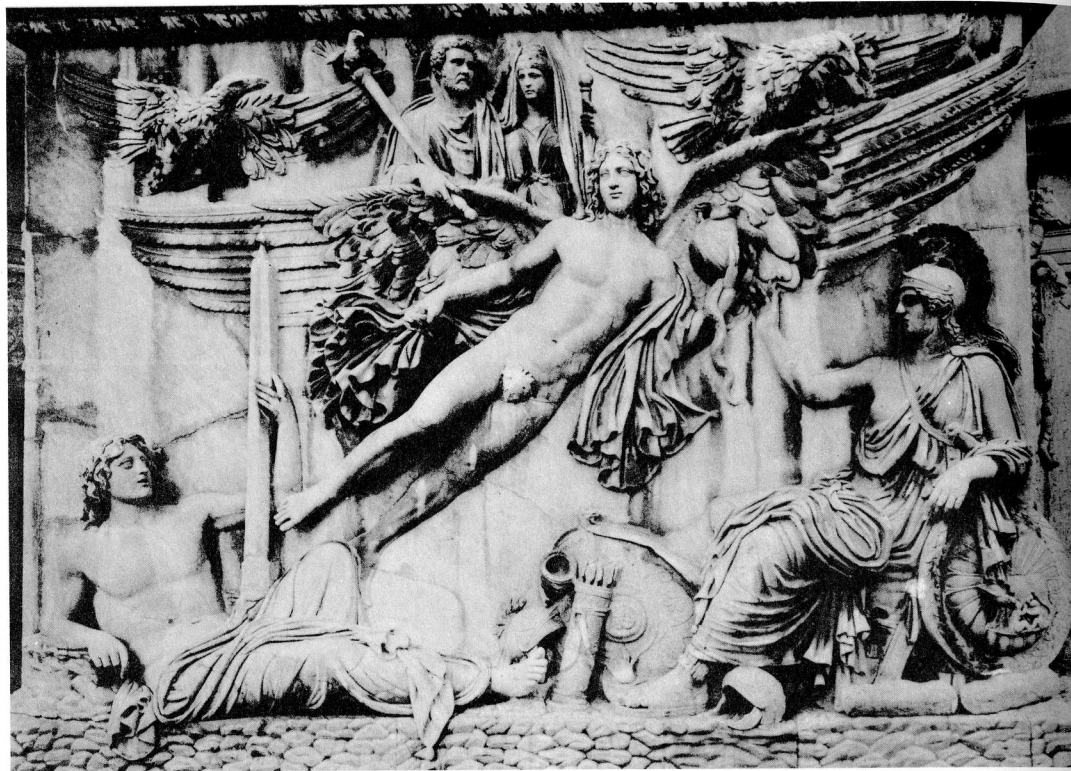
59 Orant. Statue, Vatican Museum [32]



60 Orant. Stucco relief, basilica of the Porta Maggiore, Rome [32]



61 Orants. Pagan sarcophagus, Vatican Museum [32, 33]



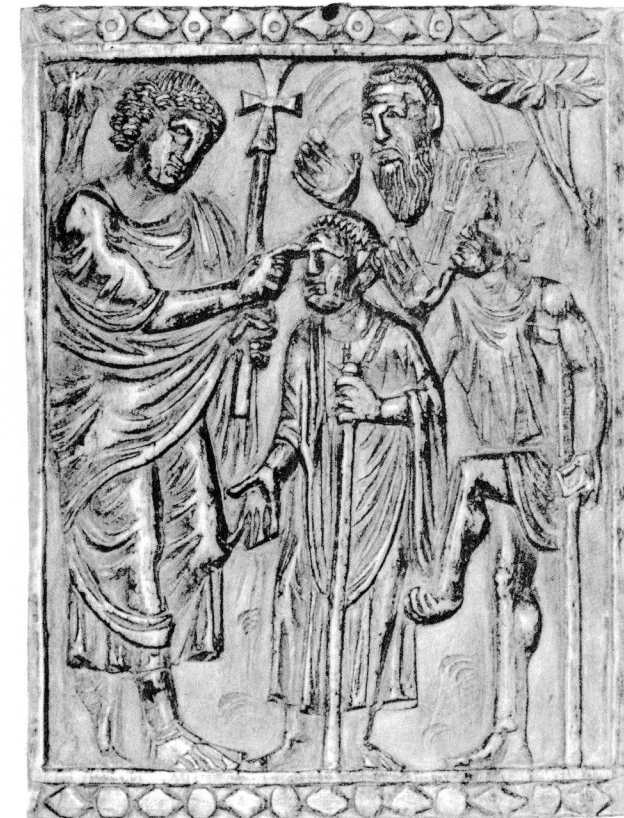
62 The apotheosis of Antoninus and Faustina, with (right) the personification of Rome in a gesture of piety. Base of column of Antoninus Pius, Rome [32]



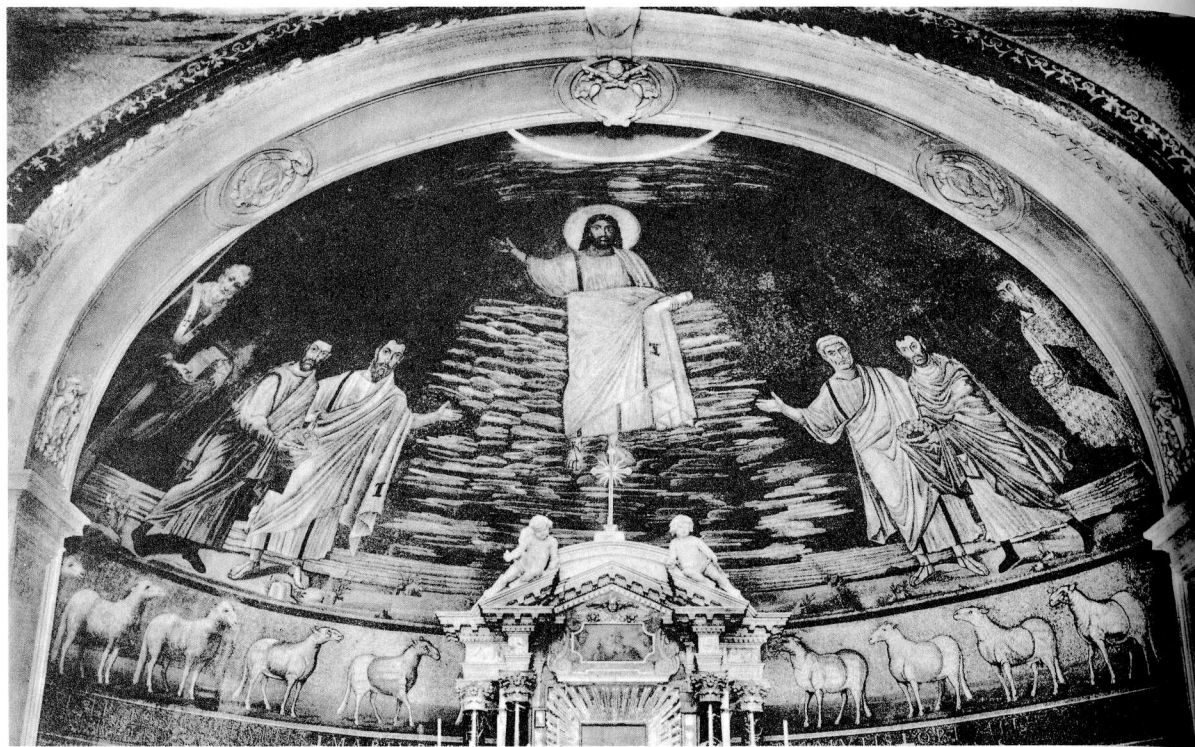
63 Seated consul with the personifications of Constantinople. Diptych of the consul Magnus, right wing (detail), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [32]



64 Detail from a fragmentary leaf of the Alexandrian Chronicle. Center: The Mother of God carrying the Child. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow [32]



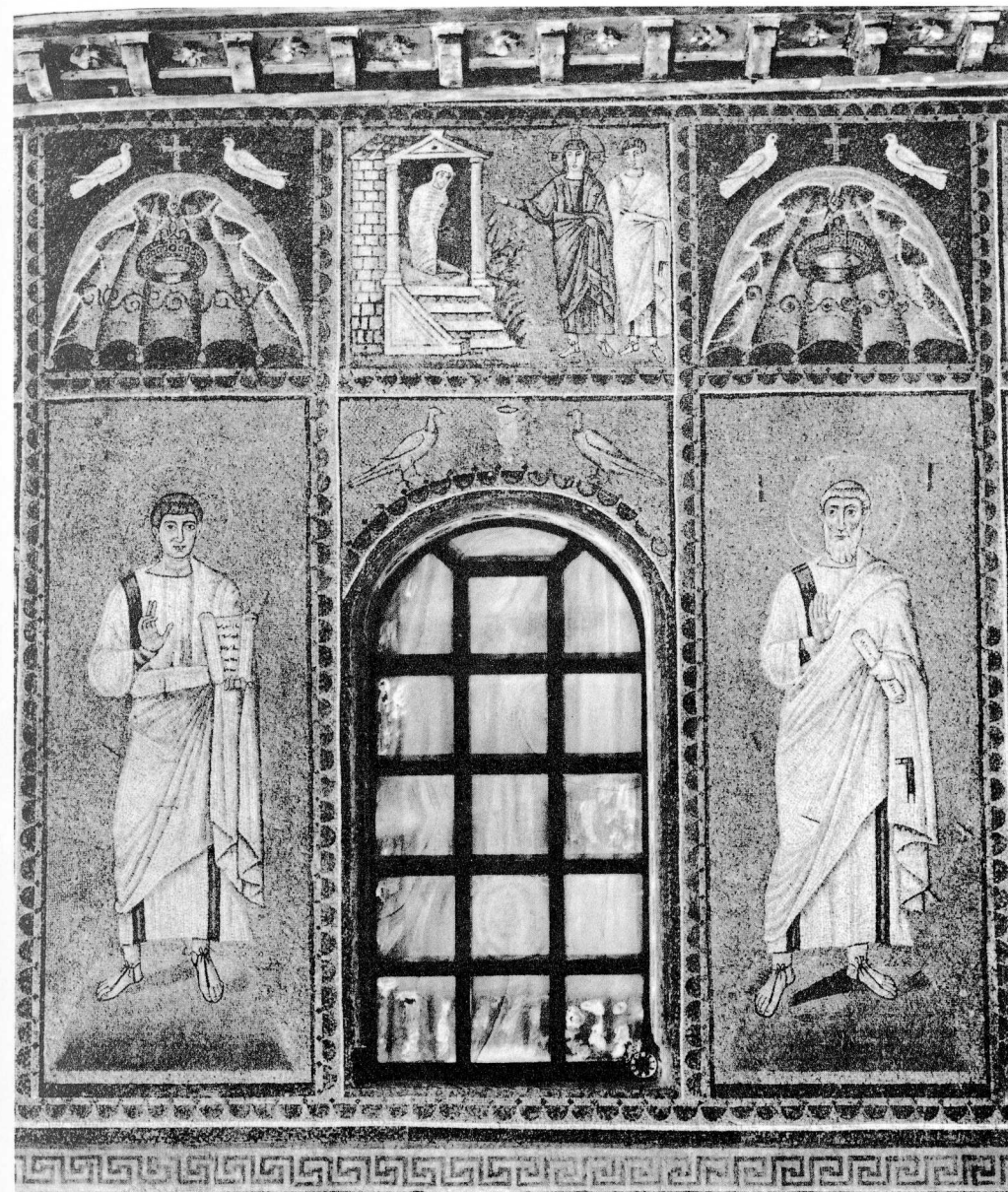
65 Christ healing a blind man, with a prophet as witness. Ivory carving, throne of Maximian, Museo Arcivescovile, Ravenna [32]



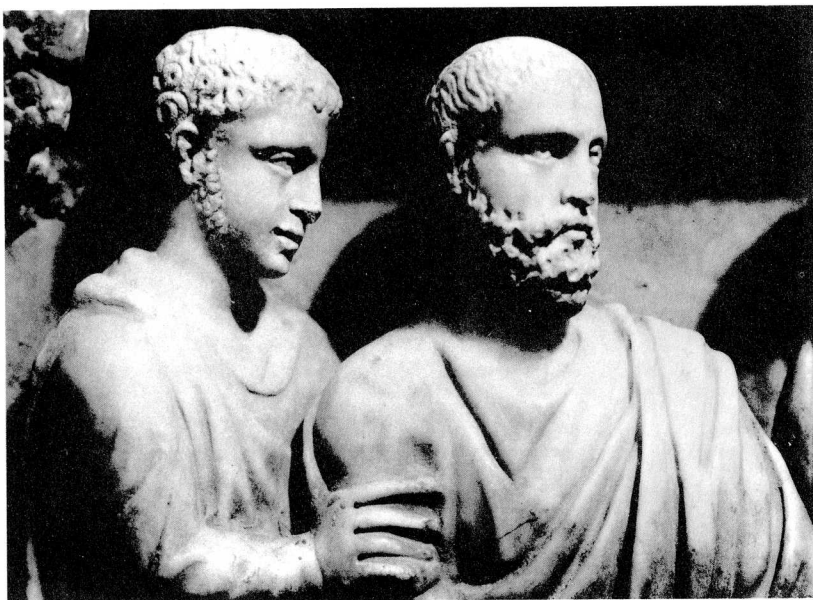
66 Christ with saints. Mosaic, SS. Cosma e Damiano, Rome [32, 33]



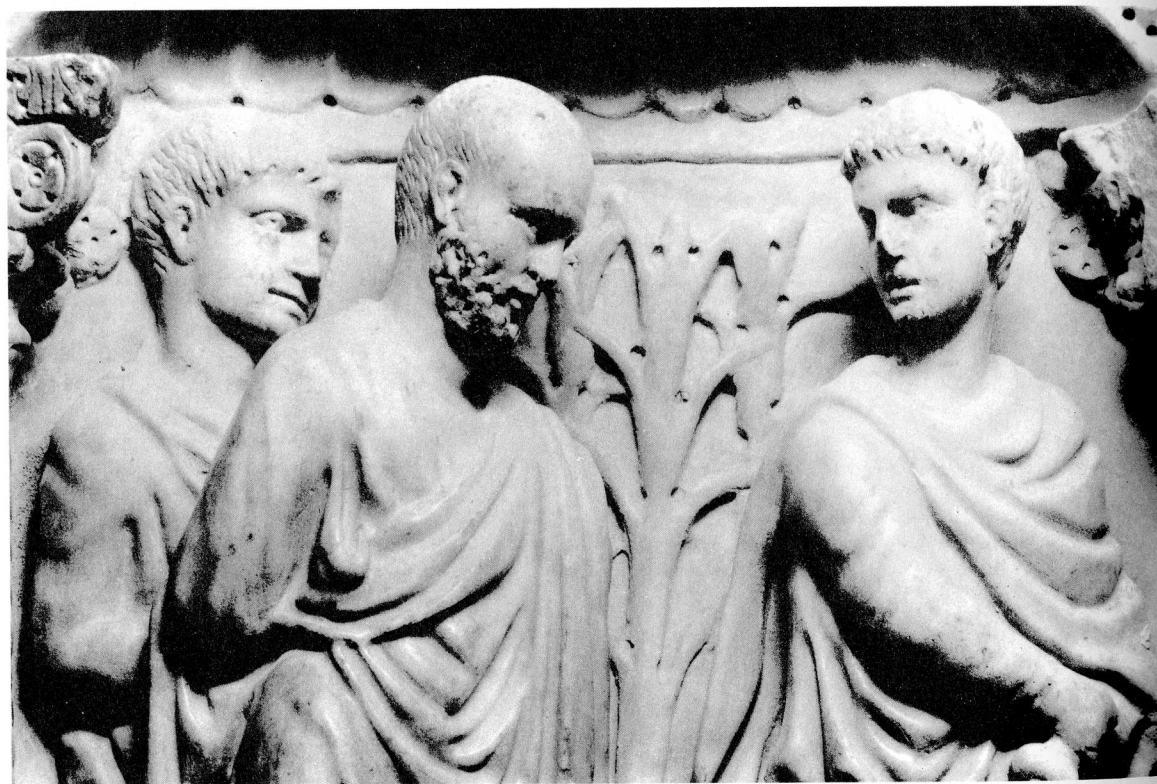
67 Christ in pose of orator and the Haemorrhoid. Wall painting, catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome [32, 33]



68 Mosaics, S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. Flanking window: A saint and a prophet [32, 33]



69 Heads of St. Peter and a soldier. Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (detail; see 29 *b*), Vatican Grottoes [33]



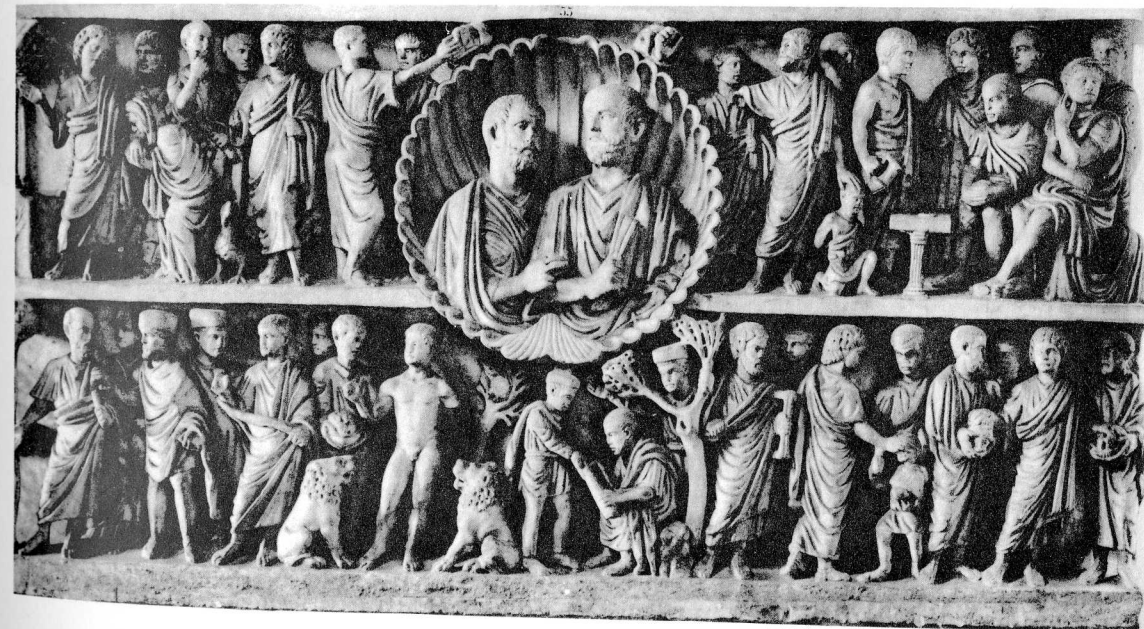
70 Heads of St. Paul and a companion. Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (detail; see 29 *f*), Vatican Grottoes [33]



71 A figure of the philosopher type. Wall painting, hypogeum of the Aurelii, Rome (water-color copy) [33]



72 Two famous doctors. Detail from miniature, Treatise of Dioscorides, Nationalbibliothek, Vienna [33]



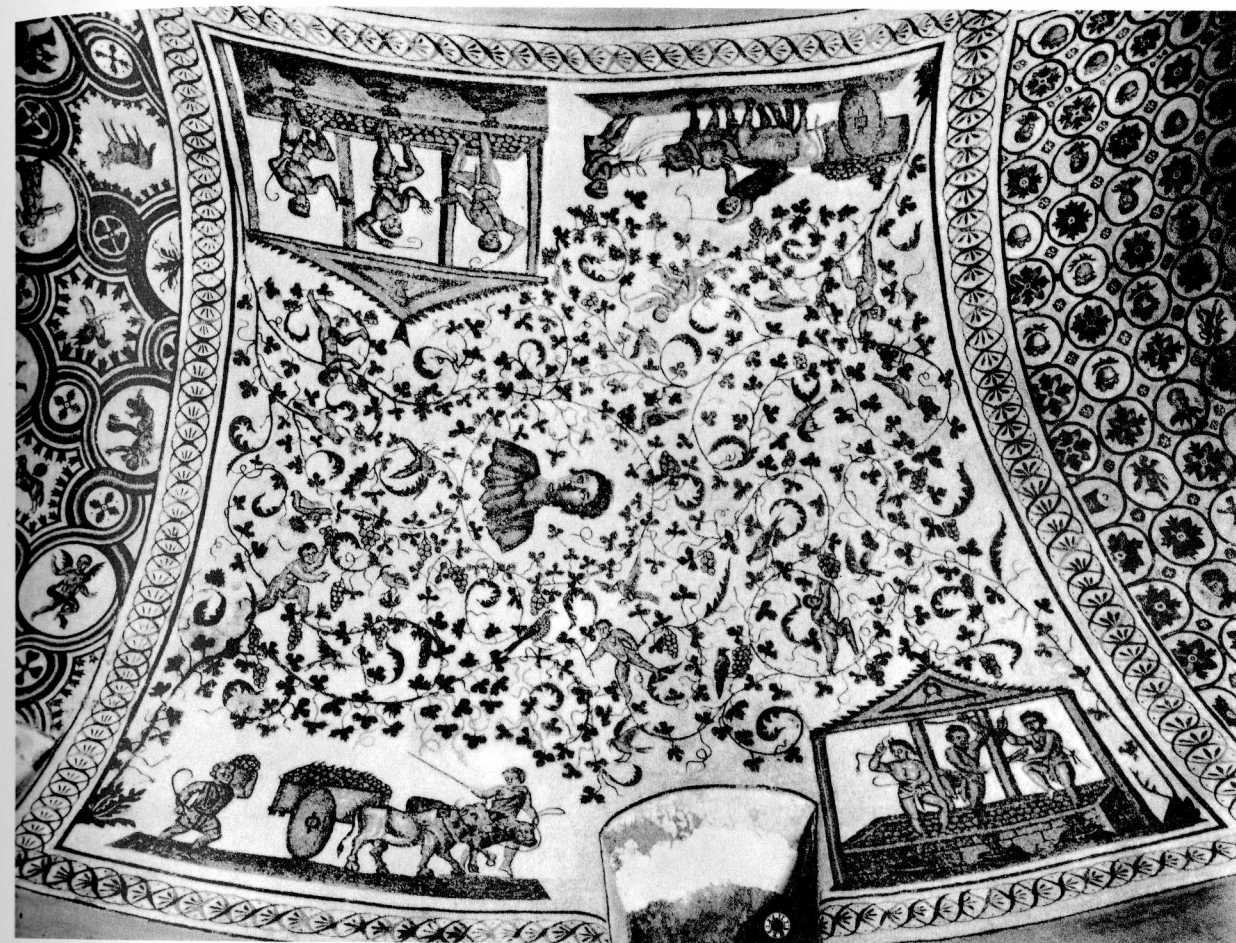
73 Christian sarcophagus known as that "of the two brothers," Lateran Museums, Rome. In background: Biblical personages represented as young beardless men [34]



74 *Putti* hunting. Pavement mosaic, Roman villa, Piazza Armerina, Sicily [34]



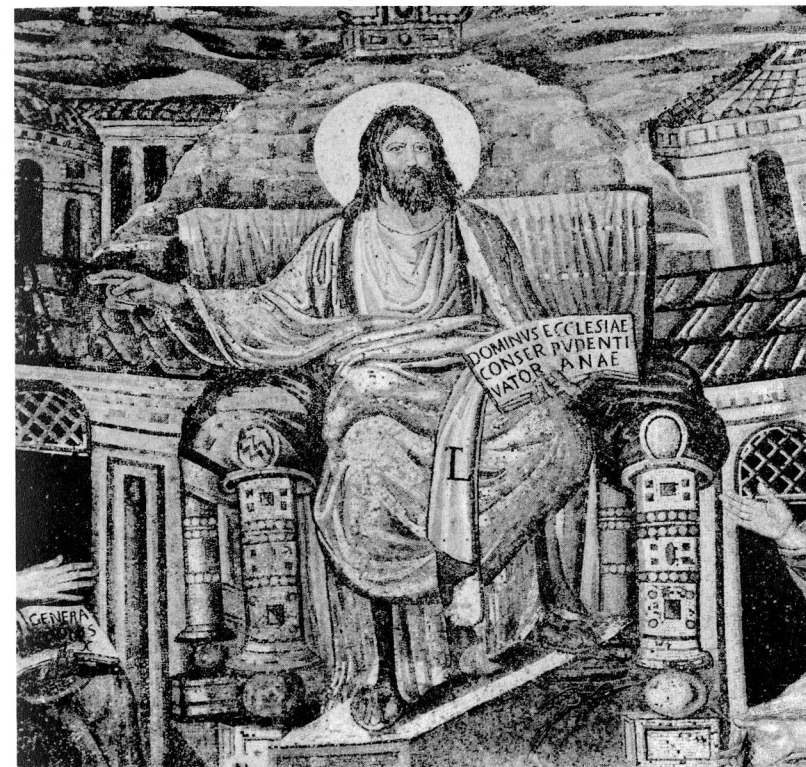
75 *Putti* harvesting grapes. Pavement mosaic, Roman villa, Piazza Armerina, Sicily [34]



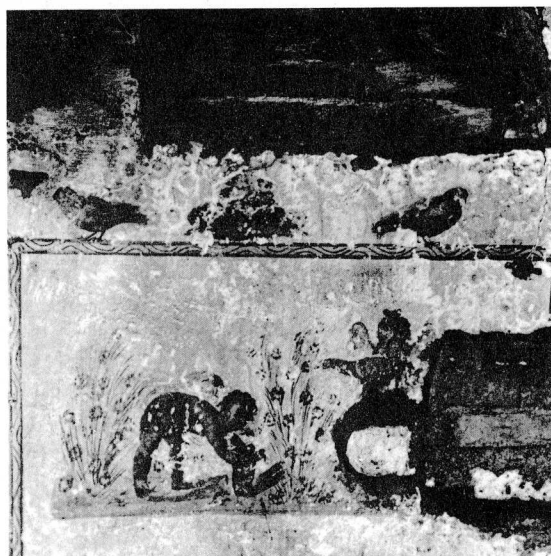
76 *Putti* harvesting grapes. Mosaic, S. Costanza, Rome [34]



77 Putti harvesting wheat. Detail from end panel, sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Vatican Grottoes [34]



80 Christ in majesty. Mosaic, S. Pudenziana, Rome [34]



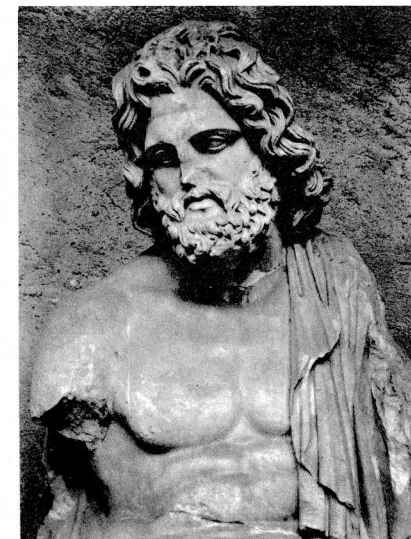
78 Putti as Cupid and Psyche. Wall painting, catacomb of Domitilla, Rome [34]



79 Unidentified scene with putti in tunics. Wall painting, catacombs under the Via Latina, Rome [34]



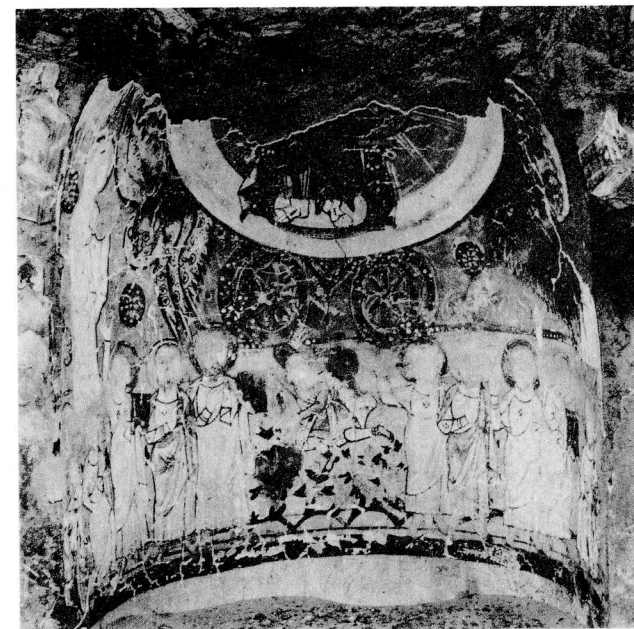
81 Christ as lord of Universe. Wall painting, catacomb of Commodilla, Rome [34]



82 Jupiter. Detail of a statue from the Villa dei Quintili. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome [34]

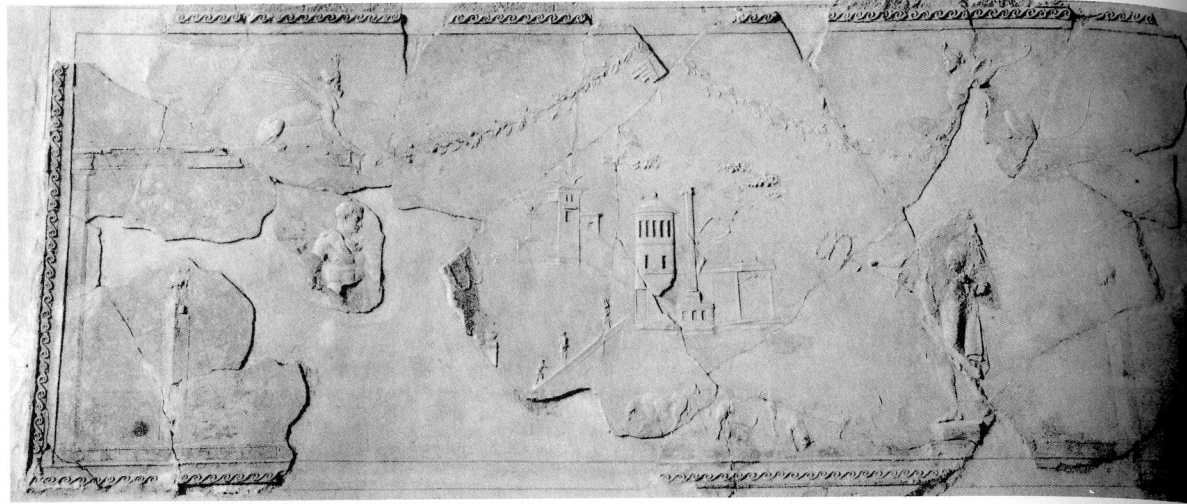


83 A victorious emperor in a triumphal chariot. Bracelet plaque, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. [35]

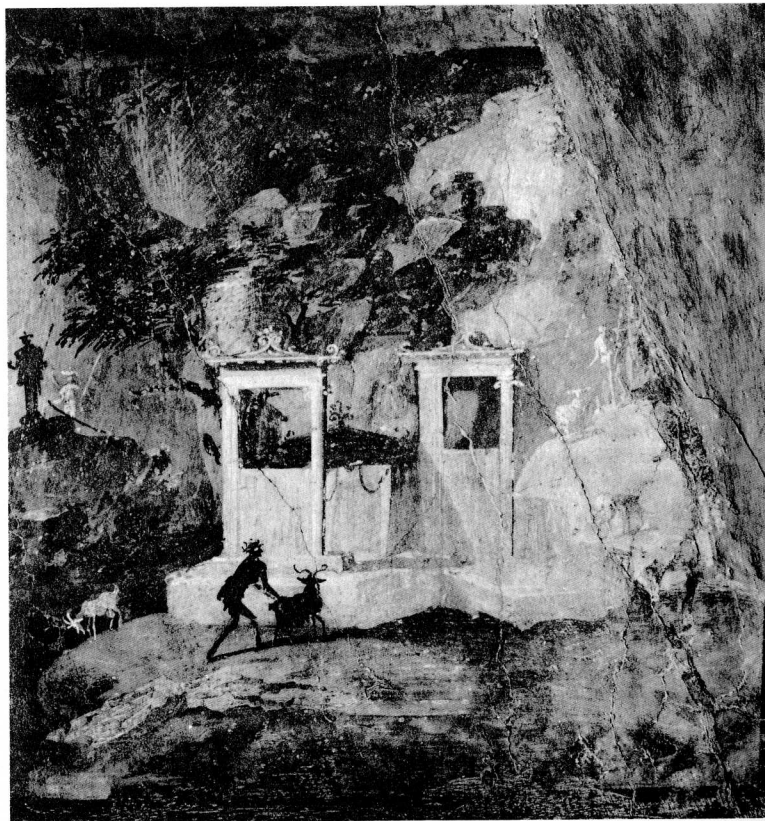


84 Wall painting, Bawit, Egypt. Above: Ezekiel's vision of God. Below, details: (left) Ezekiel; (right) Wheels of the chariot [35]





85 Stucco decoration from a house found at the Farnesina. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.
Bottom: Pastoral scene [35]



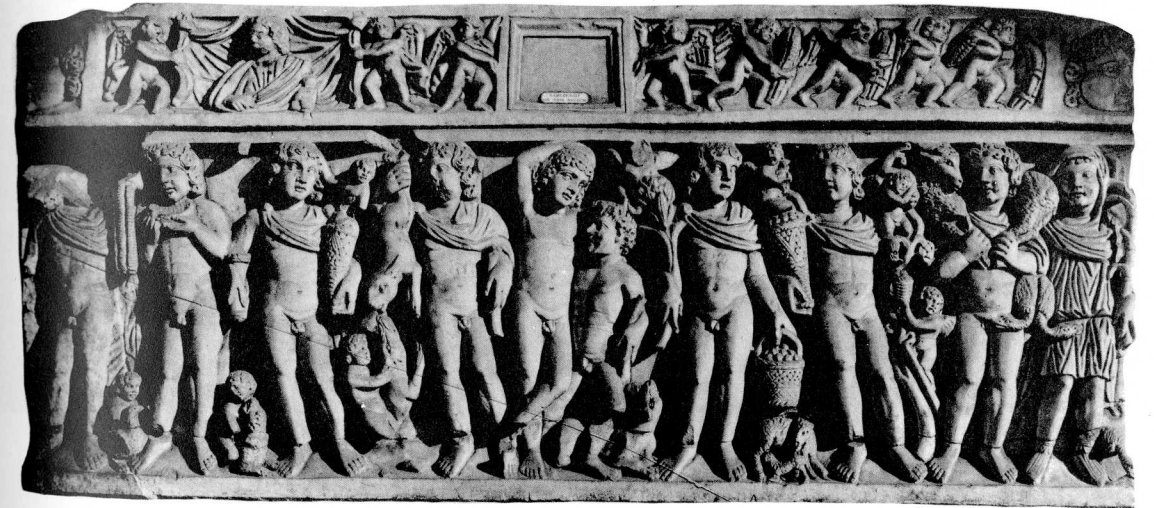
86 Pastoral scene. Wall painting, Museo Nazionale, Naples [35]



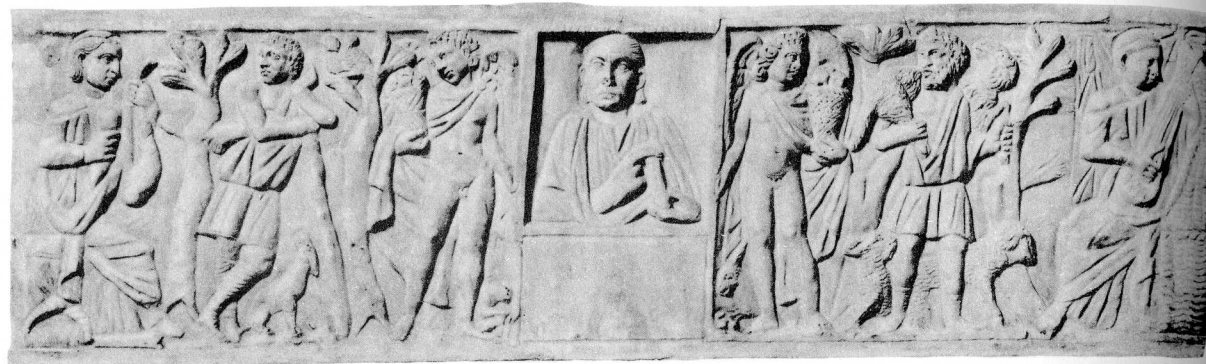
87 A shepherd and his sheep. Detail from Christian sarcophagus, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome [36]



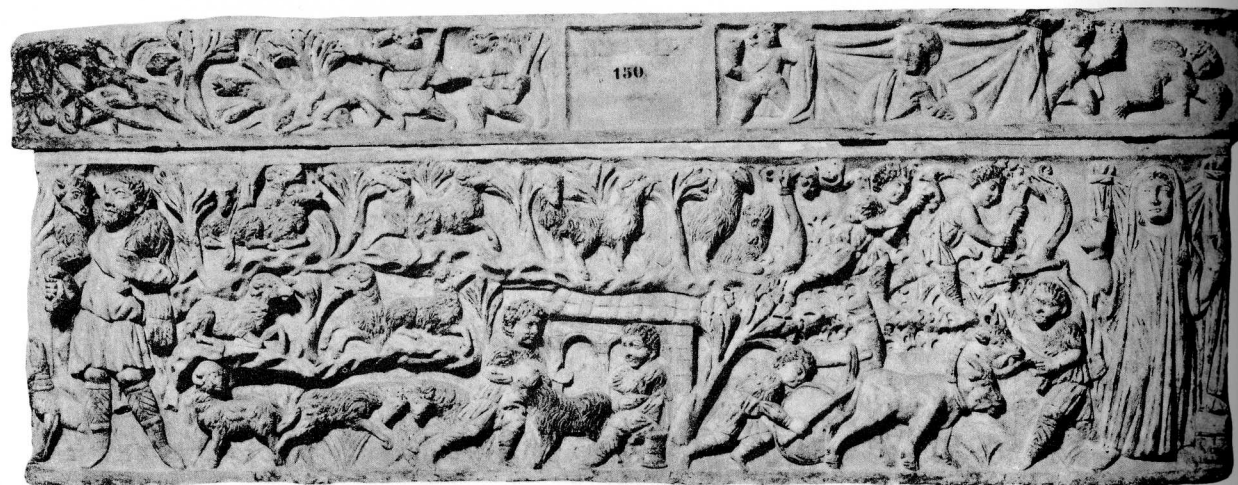
88 The Good Shepherd and his sheep. Painted ceiling, mausoleum of Trebius Justus, Rome [36]



89 Pagan sarcophagus, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome. Second figure from right: The Good Shepherd [36]



90 Christian sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome. Second figure from left: A shepherd leaning on his staff. Second figure from right: The Good Shepherd [36]



91 Christian sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome. Extreme left: The Good Shepherd [36]



92 Mother and child in a medallion. Funerary stele, Archaeological Museum, Aquileia [36]



93 Shepherdess holding child. Fragment of a pagan sarcophagus, S. Sebastiano, Lapidary Museum, Rome [36]



94 The Madonna and Child (Nikopea). Mosaic, S. Zenone, Rome [36]



95 Figure holding the labarum, the Imperial standard bearing the monogram of Christ. Cast of a coin, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [38]



96 Another figure holding the labarum. Cast of a coin, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [38]



97 Two emperors sitting on a dual throne. Medal, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna [40]



98 Constantine and his sons enthroned. Medal, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [40]



99 The apotheosis of Constantine with the Hand of God. Coin, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [40]



100 Constantine crowned by the Hand of God. Medal, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna [40, 115]



101 *Traditio legis*. Mosaic, S. Costanza, Rome [42]



102 *Traditio legis*. Mosaic, S. Gennaro, baptistry of S. Giovanni in Fonte, Naples [42]



103 The Emperor, one of the Severi, crowning a victor in front of a temple. Cast of a coin of Apamea, Phrygia, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [42]



104 The Emperor Alexander Severus as cosmocrator enthroned on the sphere of the universe. Coin of his reign (222–35), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [42]



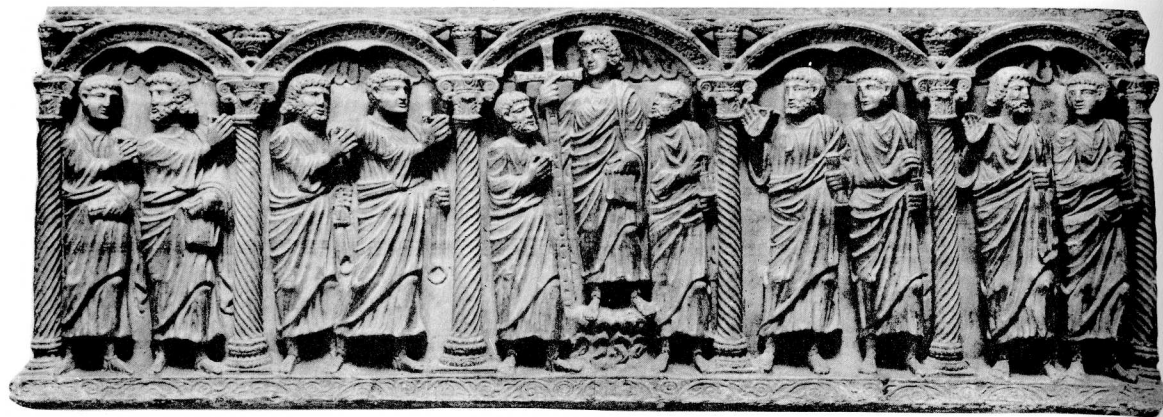
105 The Emperor Theodosius I, enthroned in majesty, hands a scroll of authority to an official. Silver plate, Academia de la Historia, Madrid [42]



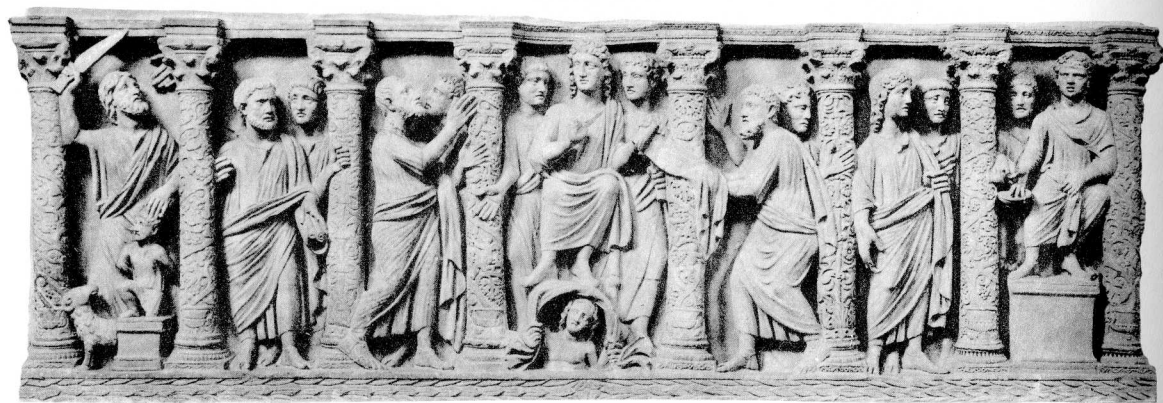
106 Christ as the universal sovereign giving a martyr's crown to St. Vitalis. Mosaic, S. Vitale, Ravenna [43]



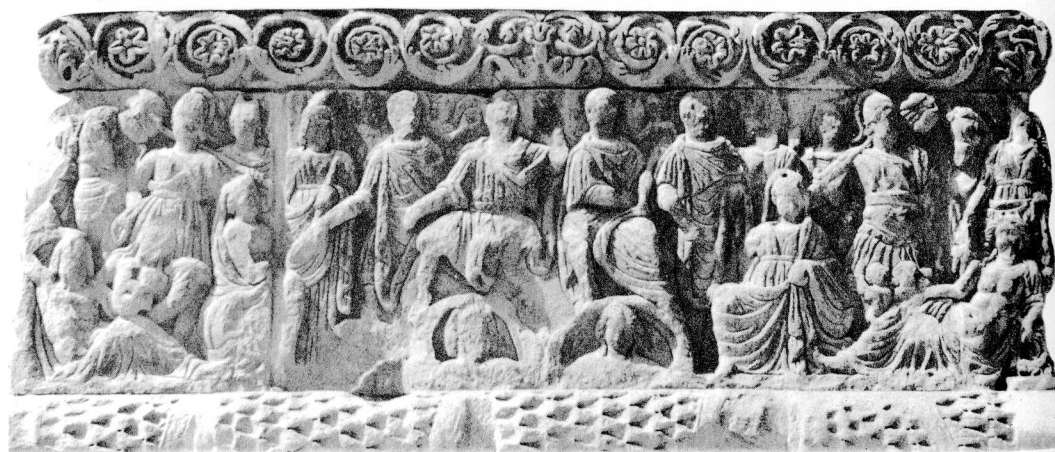
107 Four saints, two holding martyrs' crowns. Mosaic, chapel of S. Venanzio, S. Giovanni in Fonte, Rome [43]



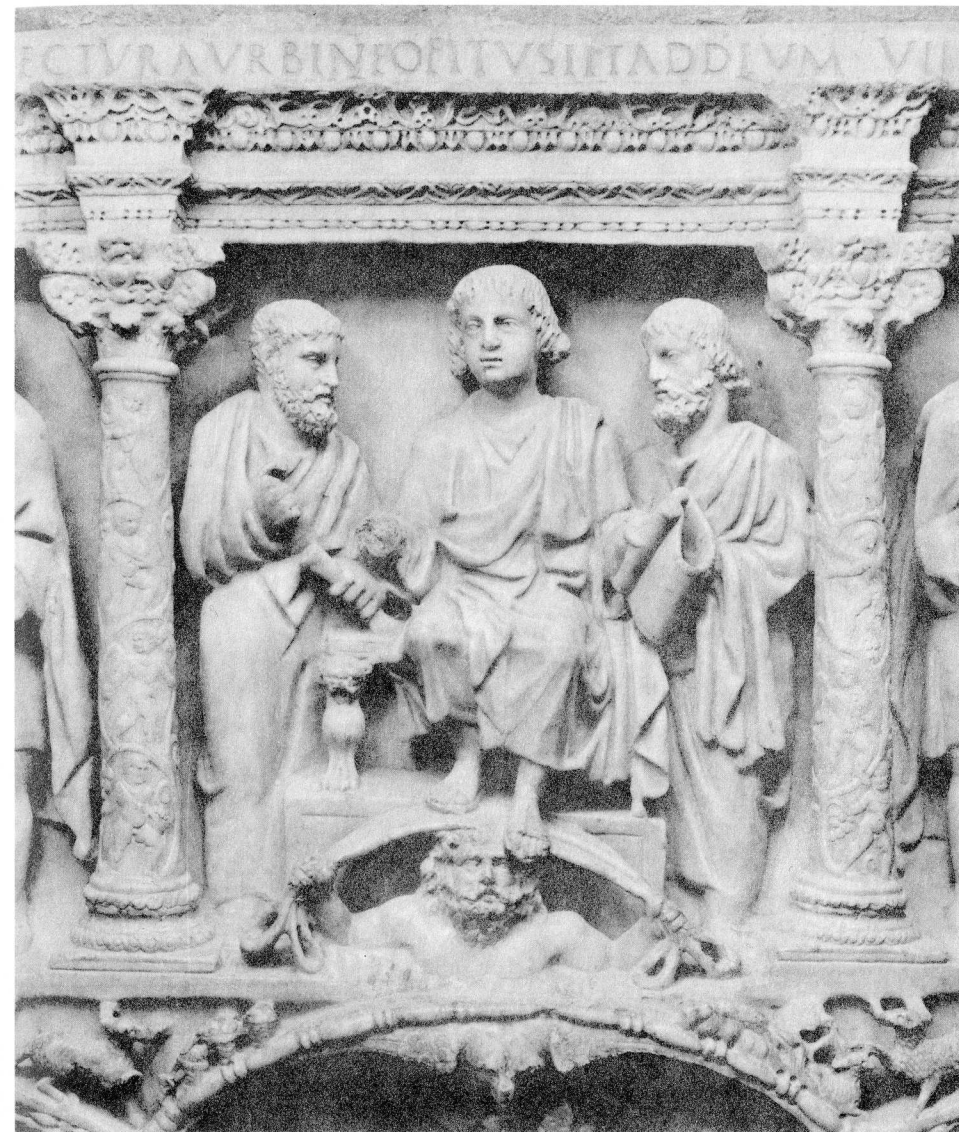
108 Sarcophagus of Sextus Petronius Probus and his wife, Vatican Museum. Center: Christ holding the cross in the pose of a lance-bearing emperor [43]



109 Sarcophagus, Lateran Museums, Rome. Center: Christ enthroned as the universal sovereign [43]



110 Arch of Galerius (detail), Salonika. Center: Two emperors enthroned as universal sovereigns [43]



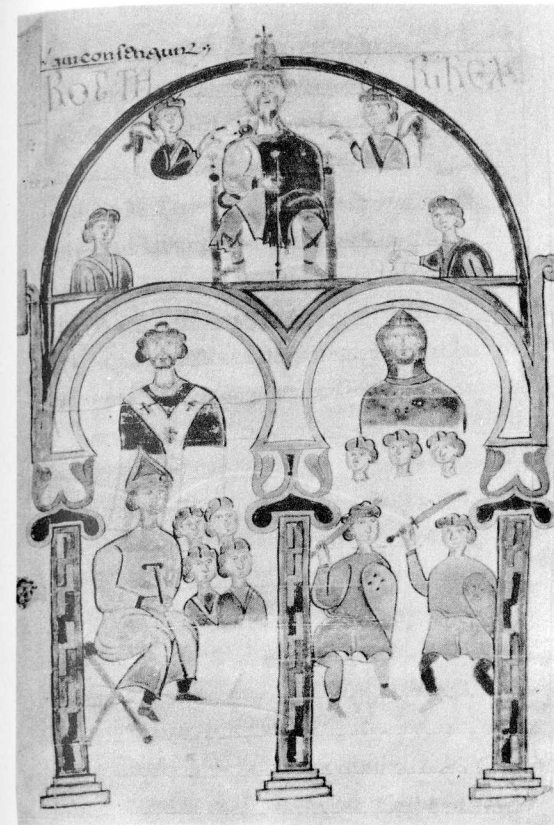
111 Christ enthroned as the universal sovereign. Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (detail; see 29 c), Vatican Grottoes [43]



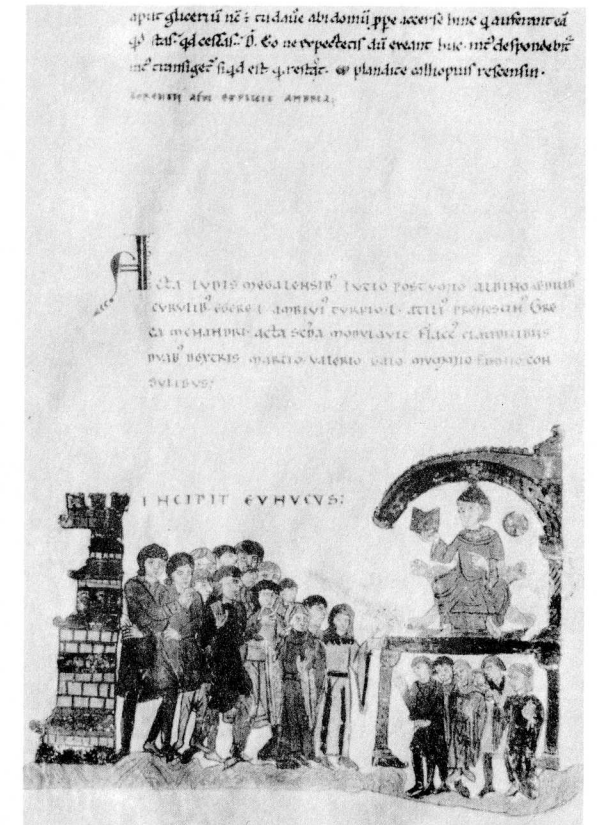
112 Christ seated, in an assembly of standing apostles. Wall painting, catacomb of Domitilla, Rome [44]



113 Christ as magistrate presiding over a council of apostles (The Last Judgment). The Barberini terra-cotta plaque, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. [44]



114 Scenes of judgment, with Christ as supreme judge. Miniature, Lombard Laws, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid [44]



115 Scene of judgment. Miniature, Terence's *Eunuchus*, Bibliothèque Municipale, Tours [44]



116 Arch of Constantine (detail), Rome. Center: Constantine distributing gifts of money, the *largitio* [44]



117 A theophany of Christ. Mosaic (detail of 280), Hosios David, Salonika [44]



118 A theophany of Christ. Wall painting (detail of 323), Bawit, Egypt [44]



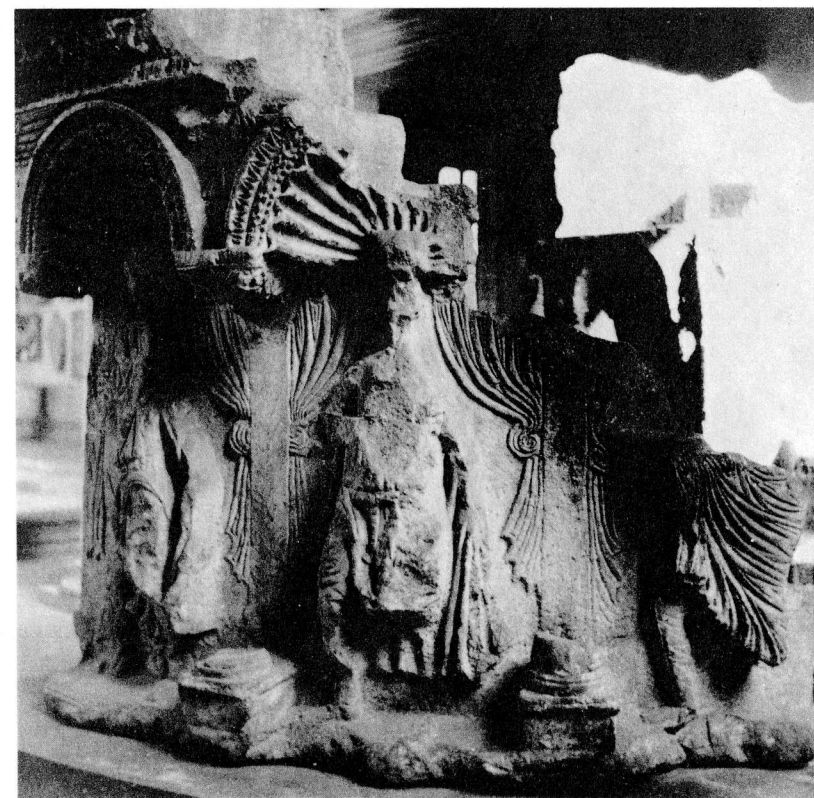
119 A theophany of Christ, with the Virgin and apostles below. Wall painting, Bawit, Egypt [44]



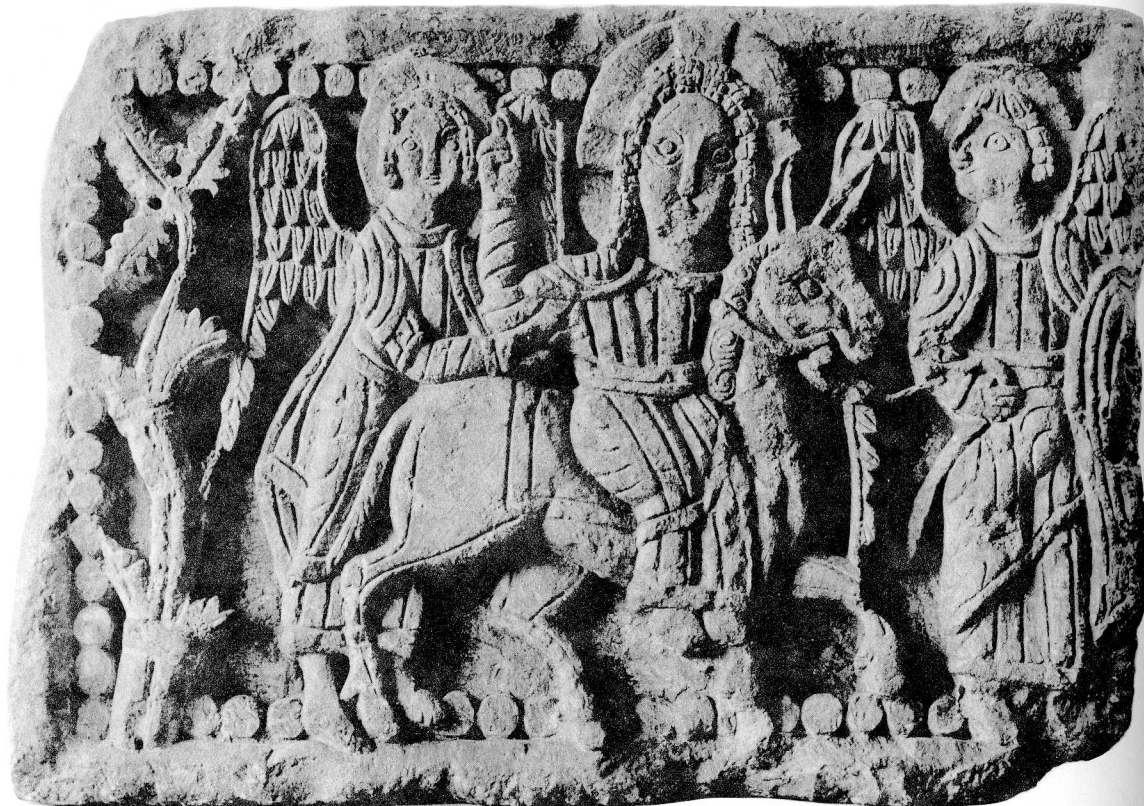
120 Barbarians bearing offerings in front of the Imperial loggia. Base of the obelisk of Theodosius I, Constantinople [45]



121 Parthian prisoners presenting offerings. Arch of Galerius (detail), Salonika [45]



122 The Adoration of the Magi. Detail of ambo from St. George's Church, Salonika. Archaeological Museums, Istanbul [45]



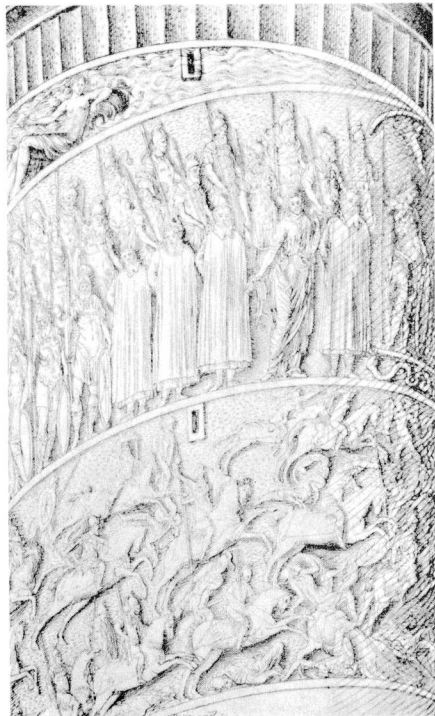
123 The Entry into Jerusalem. Coptic relief, Staatliche Museen, Berlin [45]



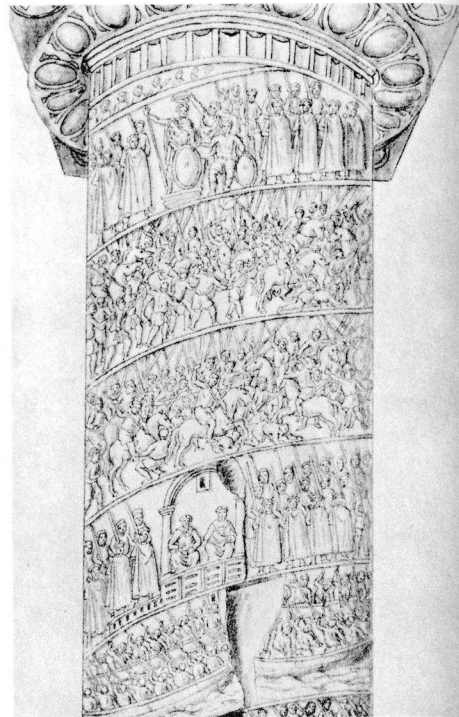
124 The *adventus* of Constantius Chlorus. Coin of his reign, British Museum, London [45]



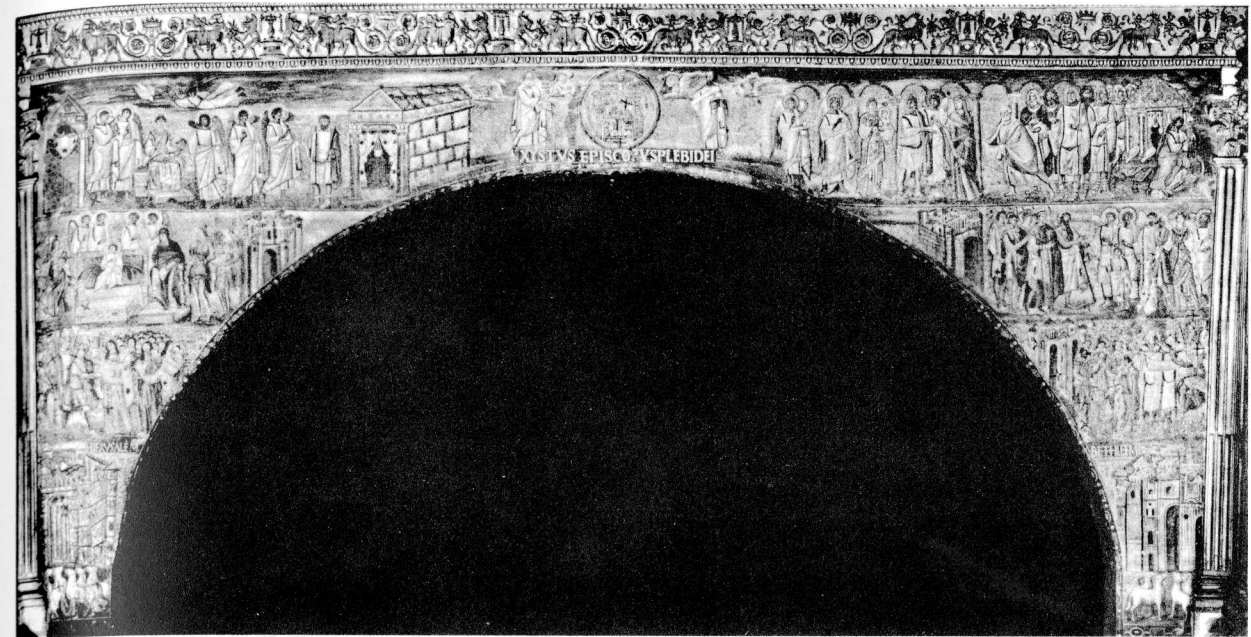
125 The *adventus* of Constantius II between a soldier and a winged Victory. Silver plate from Kerch, State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad [45]



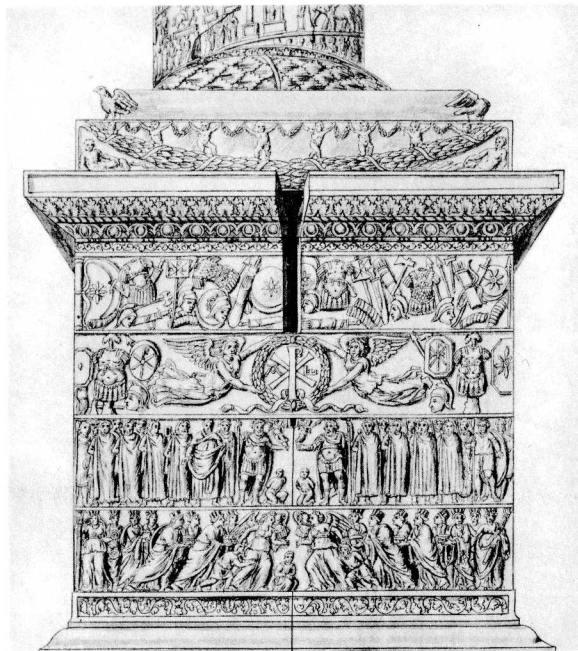
126 Column of Arcadius, Constantinople (now destroyed). Sketch by Melchior Lorichs dated 1559 (now lost; engraved copy by Reymond) [46, 47]



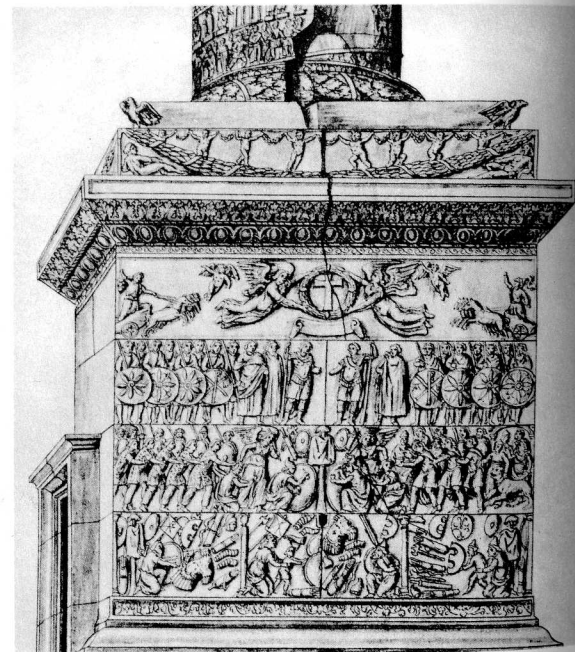
127 Column of Arcadius, upper portion, south side. Detail from one of three drawings by an unknown artist c. 1574. Trinity College, Cambridge [46, 47]



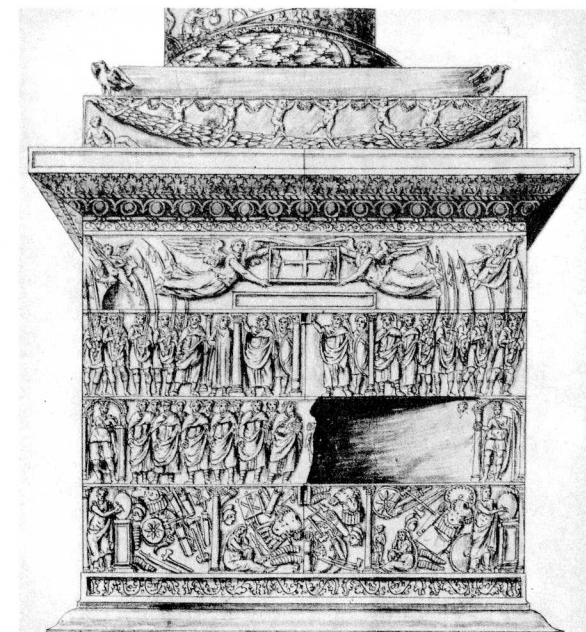
130 The triumphal arch. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [46]



128 Column of Arcadius, south side of base [46]



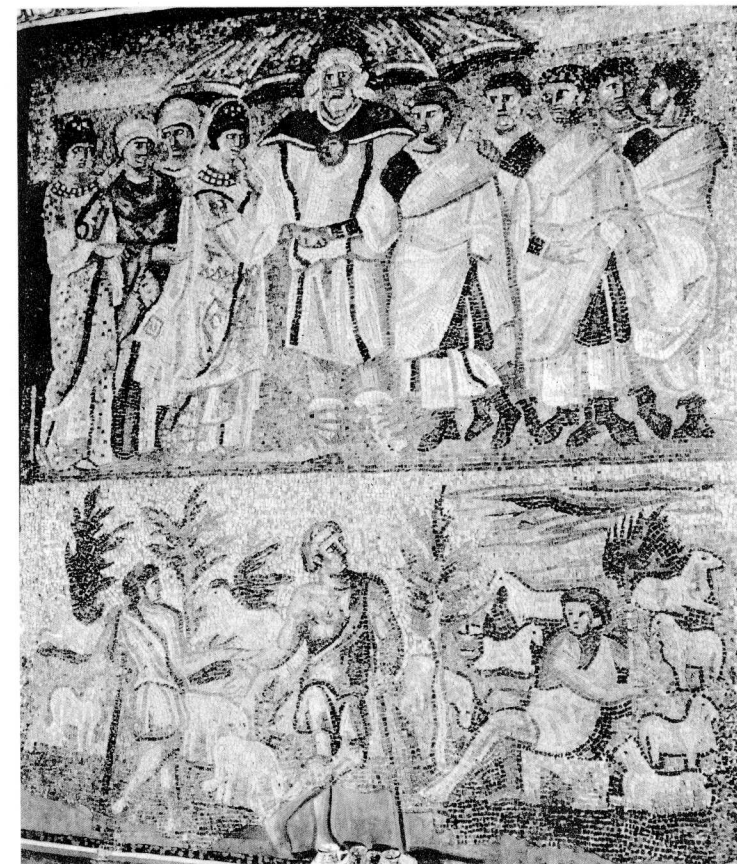
129 Column of Arcadius, west side of base [46]



131 Column of Arcadius, east side of base [46]



132 Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome. Top: The childhood of Moses [47]



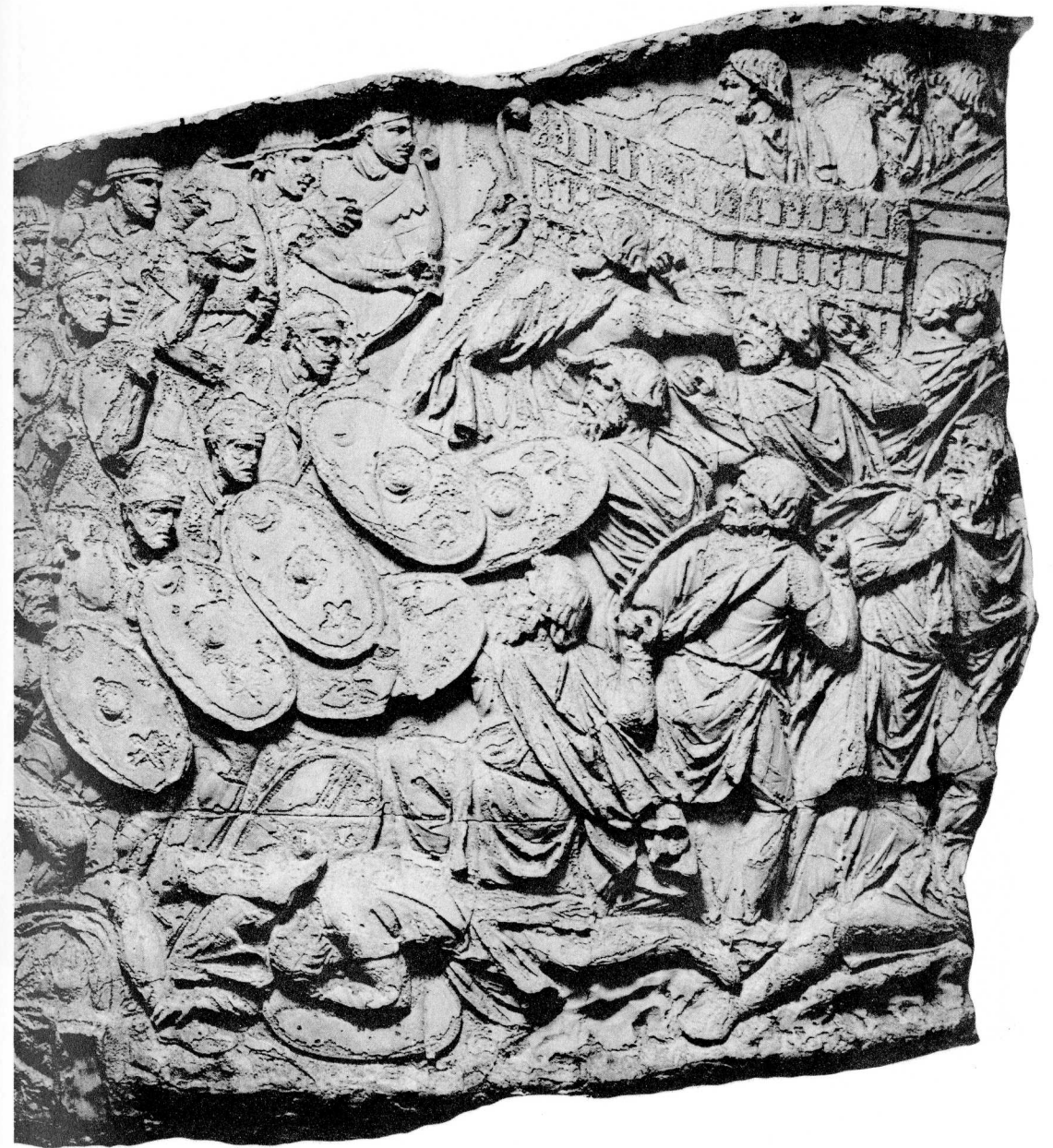
133 Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome. Top: Moses' wedding [47]



134 The Adoration of the Magi. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [47]



135 The defeat of the Amalekites. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [48]



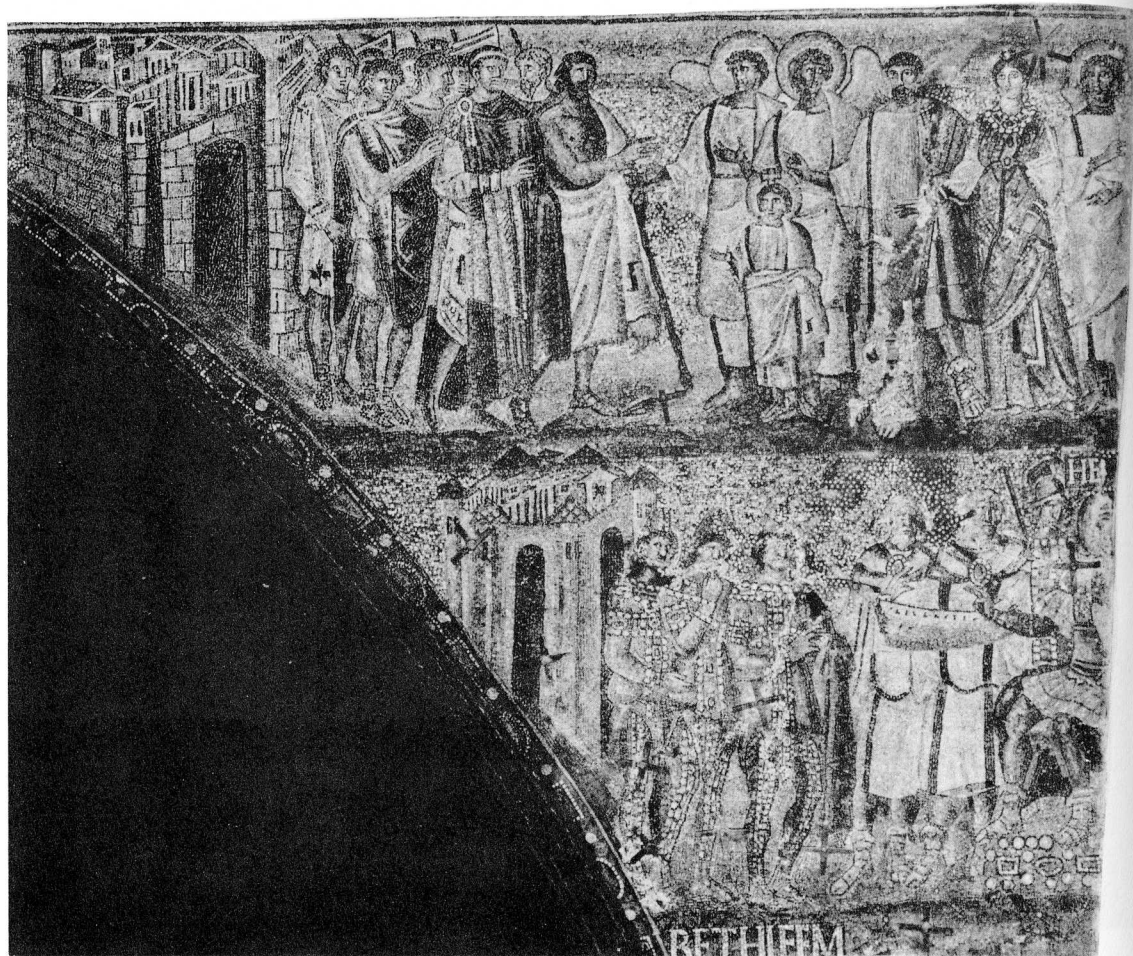
136 Romans and Dacians in combat. Column of Trajan (detail), Rome [48]



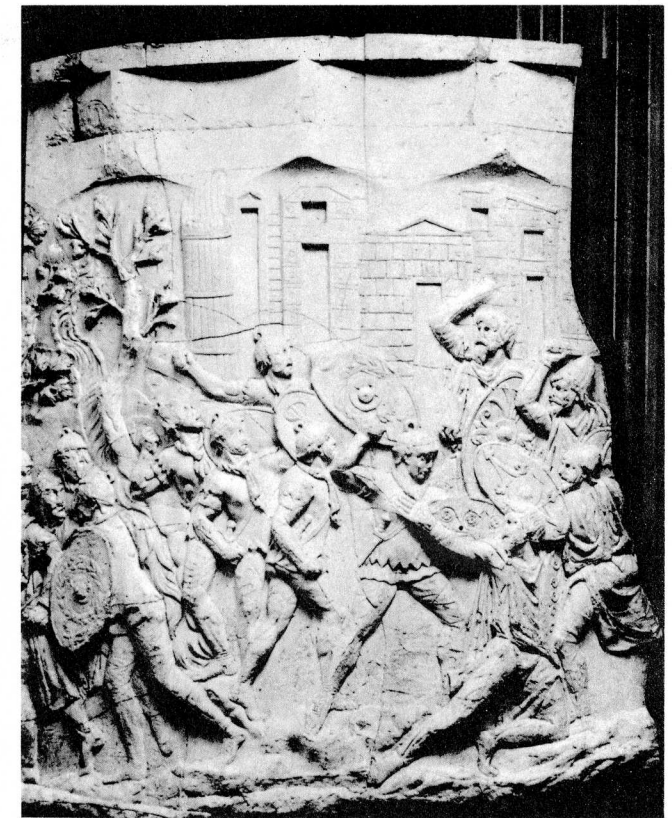
137 The crossing of the Red Sea. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [48]



138 Roman troops surprise the enemy resting. Column of Trajan (detail), Rome [48]



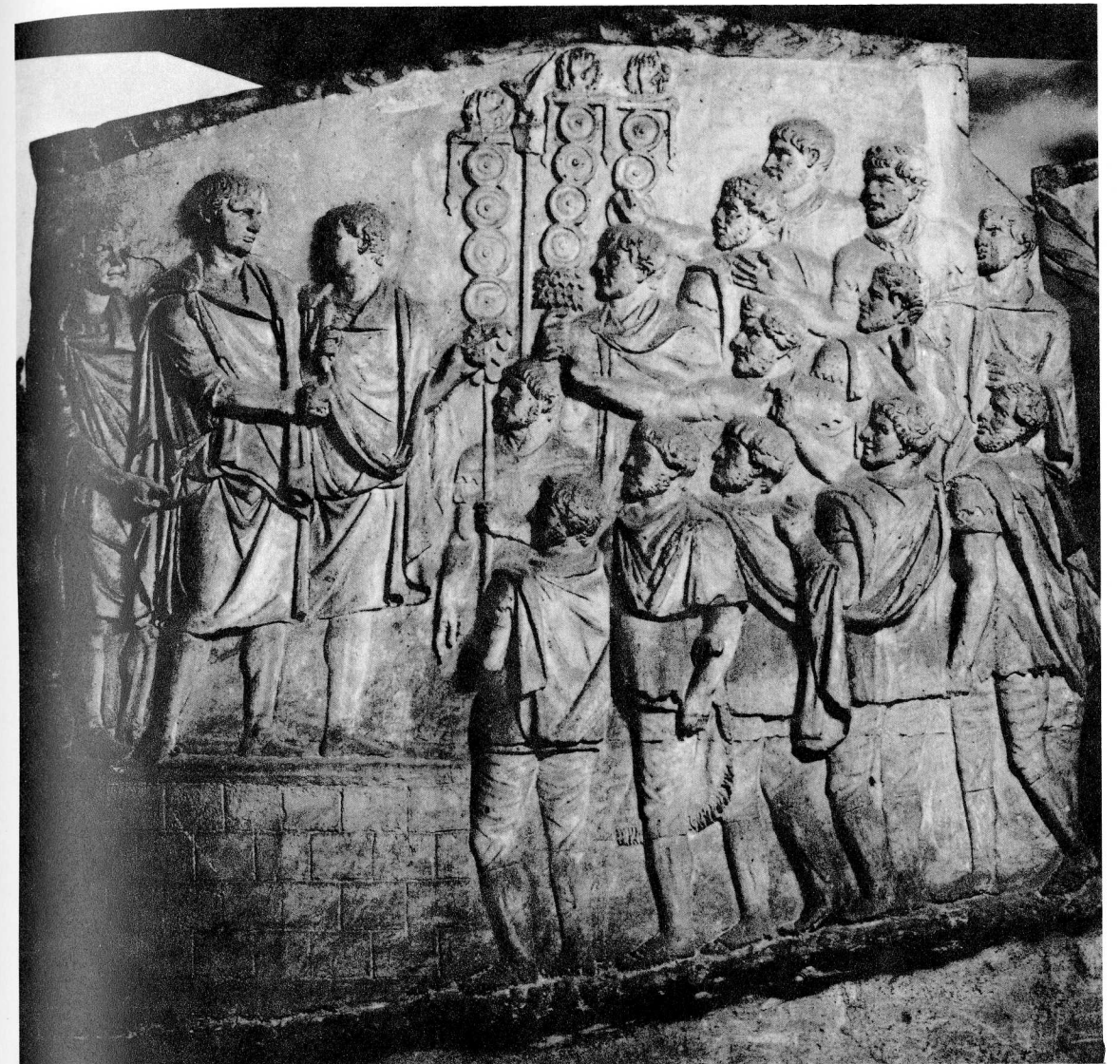
139 Scenes outside fortified towns. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [49]



140 An engagement outside a fortified town. Column of Trajan (details), Rome [49]



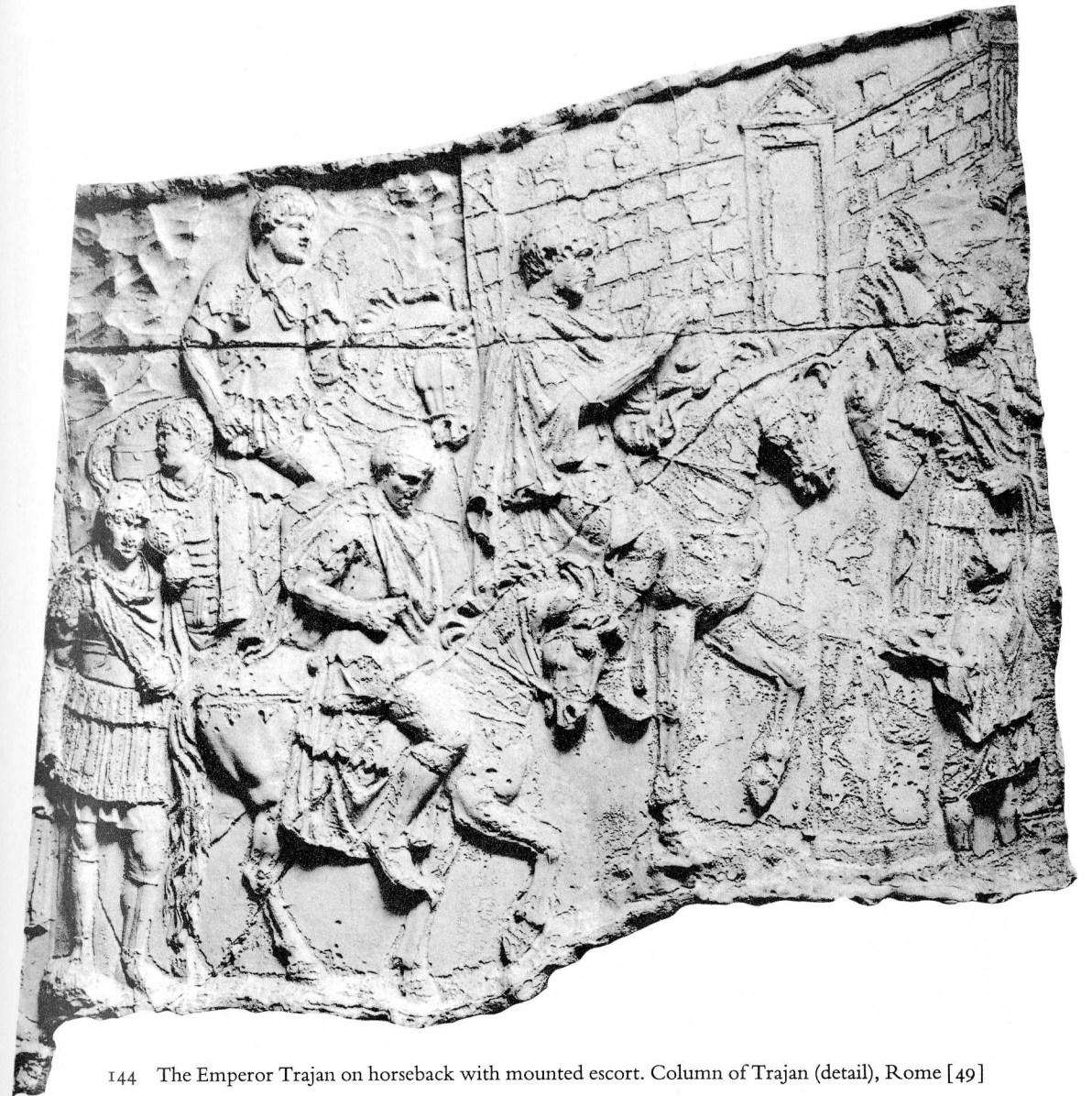
141 Joshua stopping the sun. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [49]



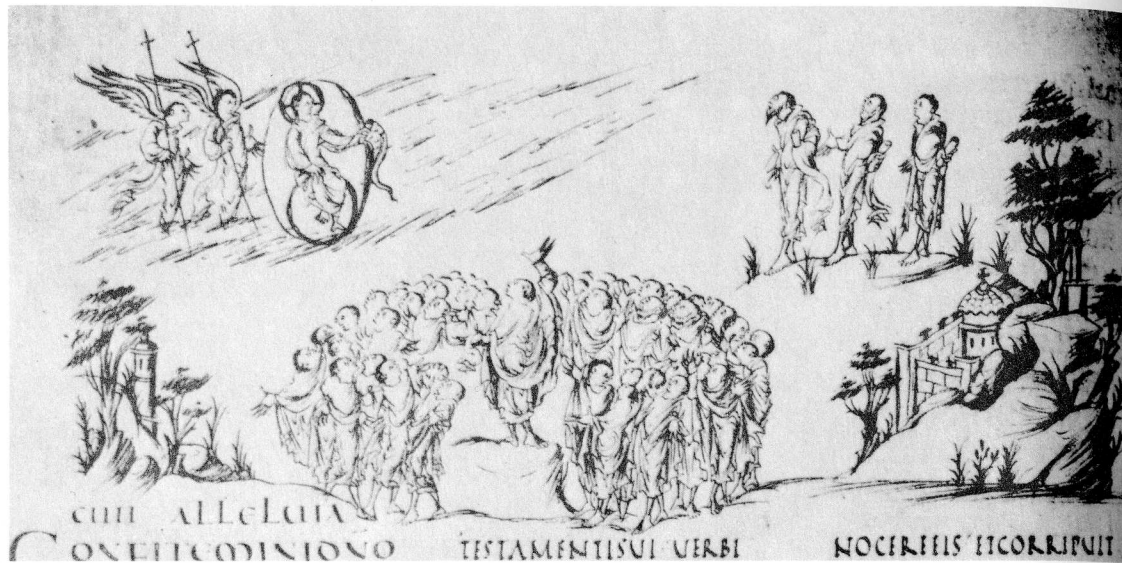
142 The Emperor Trajan on a platform, addressing his troops. Column of Trajan (detail), Rome [49]



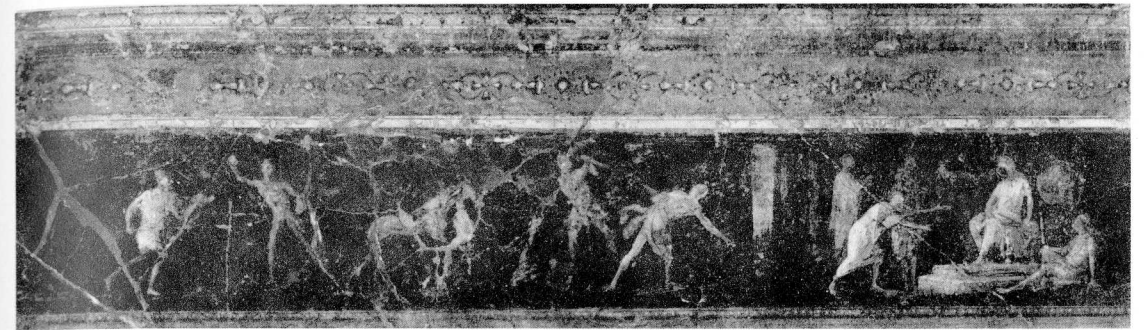
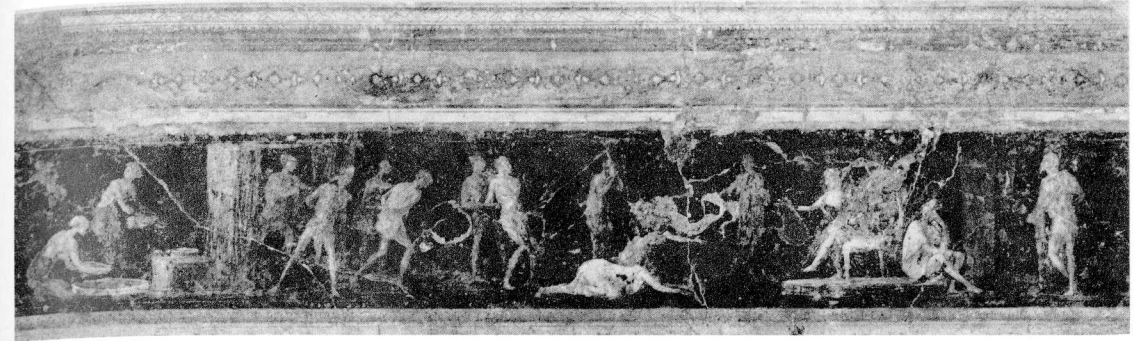
143 Abraham, on horseback, meeting Melchizedek. Mosaic, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome [49]



144 The Emperor Trajan on horseback with mounted escort. Column of Trajan (detail), Rome [49]



145 Manuscript illustrations for Psalms 105 and 44, Utrecht Psalter, Utrecht University Library [49]



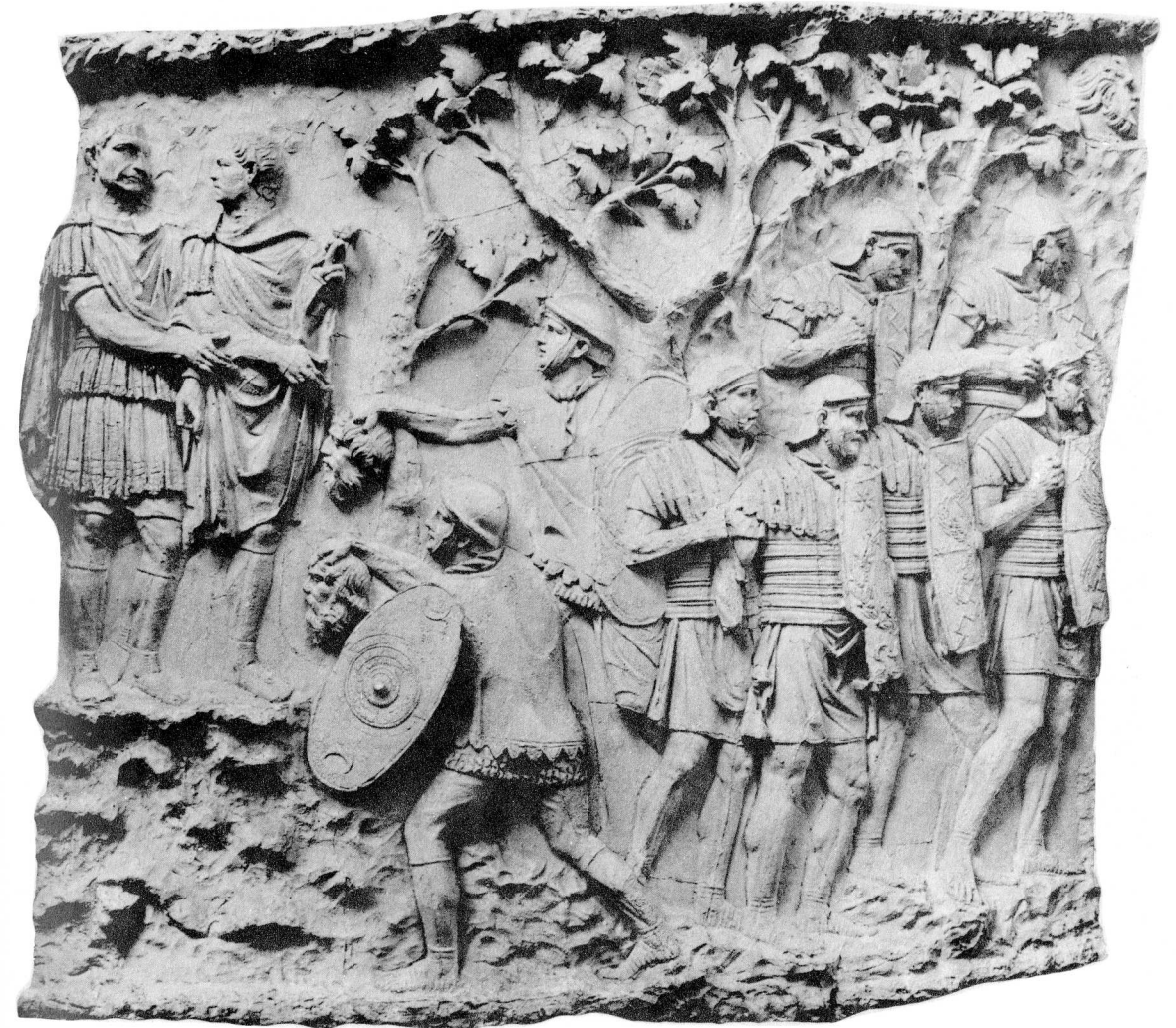
146 Tribunal scenes. Wall paintings from a Roman house found under the Farnesina, Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome [49]



147 The execution of three anonymous martyrs. Wall painting, SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome [50]



150 The decapitation of the Quadi rebels. Column of Marcus Aurelius (detail), Rome [50]



151 Roman officers mounted on an eminence to receive spoils, here the heads of enemies. Column of Trajan (detail), Rome [50]



152 Pavement mosaic from Carthage, showing the estate of Dominus Julius.
Musée du Bardo, Tunis [51, 52]



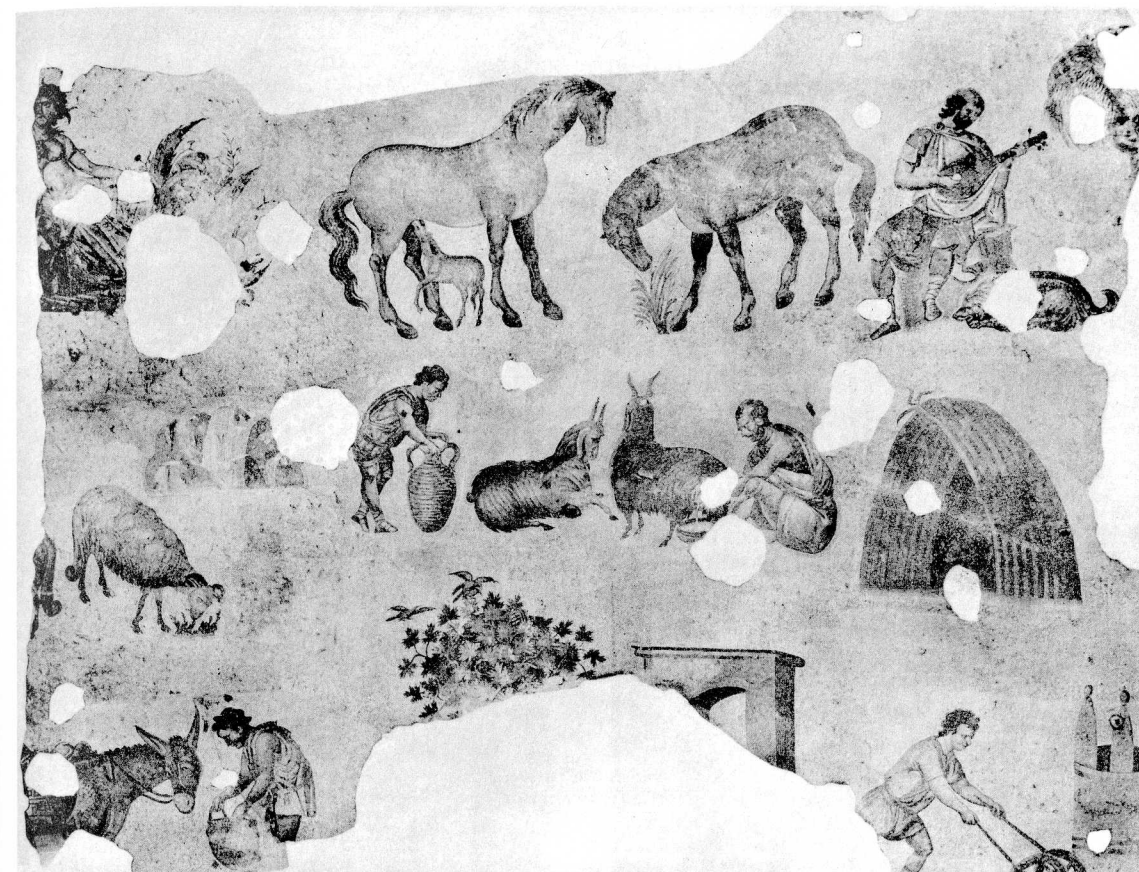
153 Pavement mosaic with allegorical
representations, from the synagogue of Ma'on.
Nirim, Israel (drawing) [52]



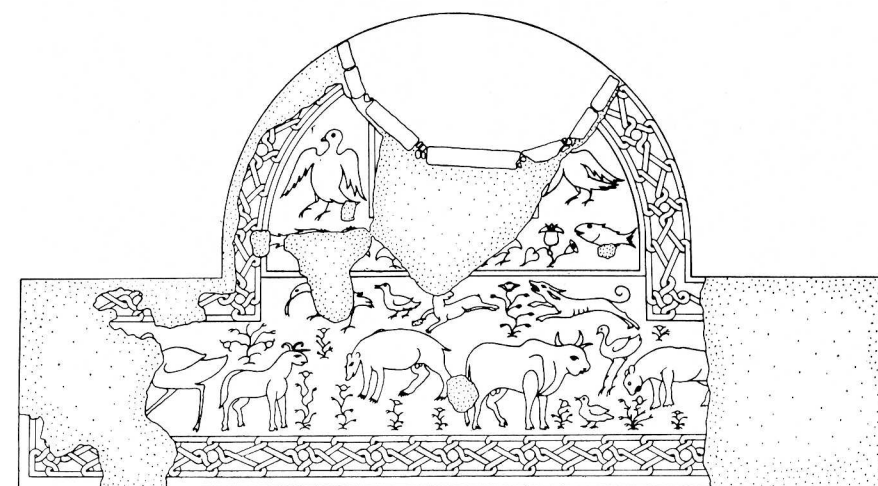
154 Mosaic from a church at Kabr-Hiram, Lebanon. Louvre, Paris [52]



155 Pavement mosaic in the church of St. George, Mt. Nebo, Jordan [52, 53]



156 Pavement mosaic in the Great Palace, Istanbul [53]



157 Animals under the Peace of the Messiah. Pavement mosaic, Ayas, Cilicia (drawing) [54]



158 The Byzantine emperors Philippicus (r. 711-13), Justinian II (r. 685-95, 705-11), and Anastasius II (r. 713-16) represented on coins (here, casts). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [64]



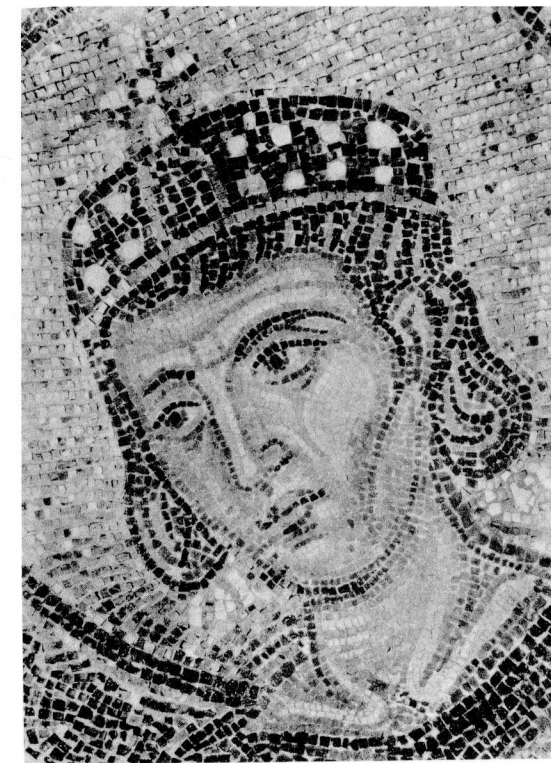
159 The consul Anastasius in a conventionalized representation. Ivory diptych (detail; see 196), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris [64]



160 A consul. Pavement mosaic, Museum, Argos, Greece [64]



161 Head of Justinian. Mosaic, S. Sophia, Istanbul [65]



162 Head of Constantine. Mosaic, S. Sophia, Istanbul [65]